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NEWS

1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey Will Explore the Nation's Irrigation Practices

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 11, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Selected Montana farmers and ranchers who irrigate part or all of their land will soon participate in a statistical portrait of America's irrigation practices through the 1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey. This survey is the sole source of comprehensive data about the Nation's irrigation practices for each State and 20 water resource areas. Compared to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, which provides only acreage information regarding irrigation, the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey details the source of water, quantity applied, and specific methods used to irrigate our Nation's agricultural land.

The last irrigation survey, in 1994, indicated a trend towards more conservative use of irrigation water on farms. For example, although the number of irrigated acres was relatively unchanged from 1988 to 1994, the amount of water applied dropped by 4.5 million acre feet – a decrease of nearly *1.5 trillion* gallons of water! Regarding changes in irrigation methods from 1988 to 1994, acres irrigated by sprinkler systems increased while gravity flow decreased, again signifying a conservative trend.

Report forms will be mailed in January 1999 to a sample of operations. Irrigators will be asked about method and frequency of water distribution, quantity of water used, crop yields, chemical application, number of wells, maintenance, expenditures, secondary uses of irrigation water, water management practices, improvements, and sources of information. Individual responses are strictly confidential by law and are used only to produce aggregated statistics.

Results from the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey, scheduled for release in the fall of 1999, will be used extensively by farmers, extension agents, and economists to determine the most economical and efficient irrigation methods; legislators and policymakers to prepare irrigation-related legislation and project funding; the irrigation industry to understand equipment and service needs; planners to estimate future demands on the Nation's fresh water supply; hydrologists to study water usage; and, forecasters to estimate future food supplies.

Complete, accurate, and timely reporting by operators will make the 1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey an effective tool for measuring America's irrigation practices and charting the future.

Note: For more information from NASS visit http://www.usda.gov/nass/.

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NEWS

1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties Will Spotlight the Nation's Horticulture Industry

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 11, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Strianger at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana growers of nursery, greenhouse, and other horticultural specialty crops will soon take part in a statistical snapshot of America's horticultural industry through the 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties. Compared to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, which provides a picture of the diverse agricultural sector across the country, the horticulture census shows in much greater detail the structure of one of agriculture's fastest growing industries —horticulture.

The horticulture census, conducted every 10 years, is the sole source of comprehensive data about this rapidly changing industry for each State and selected counties. Report forms will be mailed in January 1999 to all operations growing and selling $10,000 or more in horticultural specialty crops in 1998. Growers are asked about production and sales by type of plant grown, hired labor, expenses, production area, land values, irrigation, equipment, and marketing channels. The report form covers more than 230 types of horticultural crops including production, sales, selected expenses, area used for production, and hired labor.

Individual responses are strictly confidential by law and are used only to tabulate totals at the county, State, and national level. Growers needing assistance in completing their report form may call toll-free at 1-888-4AG-STAT.

Results from the horticulture census, scheduled for release in the fall of 1999, will be used extensively by extension specialists to justify research; producer associations to evaluate changes within the industry at the local level; suppliers to allocate goods and services; banks and lenders to evaluate loan applications; government agencies to develop and improve proposed legislation affecting the horticultural industry, such as quarantine regulations to safeguard horticulture crops from pests and diseases; growers to make management decisions; and others to determine import-export quotas, cost and availability of transportation, and energy usage.

To ensure an accurate picture of the horticulture industry, growers must be counted in the 1998 Census of Horticultural Specialties. Complete, accurate, and timely reporting will make the census an effective tool for charting horticulture's future.

Note: For more information from NASS visit http://www.usda.gov/nass/.

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NEWS

Winter Wheat Seedings for Harvest in 1999

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 12, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Poor prices and low moisture conditions last fall caused Montana winter wheat producers to seed the smallest winter wheat crop since 1937. Winter wheat seeding totaled 1.05 million acres, down 25 percent from last year's 1.4 million acres. Current moisture conditions are generally good, but the lack of snow cover is a concern to producers.

Nationally, winter wheat seeded area for 1999 is expected to total 43.4 million acres, down 7 percent from 1998. This is the smallest area since 1972. Class breakdowns approximate: Hard Red Winter, 30.9 million; Soft Red Winter, 9.0 million; White Winter, 3.5 million.

Hard Red Winter (HRW) wheat seeded area is about 30.9 million acres, down 5 percent from 1998. Most HRW states have planted less wheat. Nebraska and Texas are notable exceptions; Minnesota and New Mexico also have increased. In the rest of the Great Plains up into Montana, the declines total more than 1.6 million acres.

Arizona and California durum wheat seeded area for 1999 harvest is placed at 190,000 acres. This total is down 42 percent from their final 1998 planting. Seeding had made good progress in California's San Joaquin Valley during October into early November. Seeding in the Imperial Valley started in late November delayed by late vegetable harvests.

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NEWS

December 1, 1998 Grain Stocks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 12, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

All wheat stocks in Montana on December 1, 1998 totaled 160.5 million bushels, up 8% from the same quarter last year. Stocks stored on the farm accounted for 135.0 million bushels of the total with the remaining 25.5 million bushels stored off farm. All spring wheat stocks, at 108.3 million bushels, was up 7% from last year and accounted for 67% of the total wheat stocks. Winter wheat stocks were estimated at 52.2 million bushels, up from 48.4 million bushels last year. Durum wheat stocks were estimated at 9.4 million bushels, up 68% from last year. All wheat disappearance for the September - November quarter was 41.2 million bushels, compared with 40.1 million for the same quarter last year. Barley stocks in all positions on December 1, 1998 totaled 40.1 million bushels, up 10 percent from a year ago. Oats stocks in all positions were estimated at 2.72 million bushels, down 22% from last year.

September 1, 1998 all wheat stocks were revised to 201.7 million bushels, up 1.7 million bushels from the previous estimate. The revisions were in off farm stocks with winter wheat up 1.9 million bushels to 13.5 million bushels and all spring wheat down 200,000 bushels to 17.2 million bushels. Barley stocks were also revised to 50.8 million bushels, 500,000 bushels above the previous estimate. Oats stocks were revised down by 10,000 bushels to 3.18 million bushels.

Nationally, all wheat in all storage positions on December 1, 1998 totaled 1.89 billion bushels, up 17 percent from a year ago to the biggest December inventory since 1990. Farm stocks are 680 million bushels and off-farm stocks equal 1.21 billion bushels. The farm number is up 13 percent, while the off-farm stocks are up 19 percent. The indicated second quarter disappearance of 494 million bushels is up 8 percent from the same period in 1997. Durum wheat stocks in all positions December 1, 1998 totaled 109 million bushels, up 62 percent from a year ago. Like all wheat, this is the biggest December inventory since 1990. Farm stocks, at 75.3 million bushels, are more than double those of 1997. Off-farm stocks are 34.0 million bushels, up12 percent. The indicated second quarter disappearance of 16.6 million bushels was down 19 percent from the same period a year earlier. Barley stocks in all positions on December 1, 1998 totaled 262 million bushels, up 8 percent from a year ago. Of the total barley stocks on hand, 141 million bushels were stored on farms, 5 percent above a year ago. December 1, 1998 off-farm stocks, at 122 million bushels, were 11 percent above last year. Indicated disappearance during the September-November quarter totaled 63.7 million bushels, 23 percent below the same period a year earlier.

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1998 Late Season Crops

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 12, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana producers harvested 18,000 acres of corn for grain in 1998, up 4,000 acres from last year. The average yield was 115.0 bushels per acre, down 20 bushels from last year. Production increased 10 percent from 1997 to 2.07 million bushels. Corn for silage acreage was estimated at 41,000 acres, down 4,000 acres from 1997. Yields averaged 21 tons per acre, the same as a year ago.

Nationally, corn for grain production was estimated at 9.76 billion bushels, up 6 percent from the 1997 crop, but down 1 percent from the November 1 forecast. The 1998 production ranks second behind the 10.1 billion bushels produced in 1994. The U. S. yield of 134.4 bushels per acre was up 7.7 bushels from a year earlier.

Sugar beet producers in Montana harvested an estimated 62,400 acres this year, up 4,100 acres from a year ago. Yields increased 1.6 tons from last year to average 22.6 tons per acre. Total production was estimated at 1.4 million tons, up 15 percent from the previous year, setting a new production record.

U.S. sugar beet production is estimated at 32.7 million tons, 9 percent above the 1997 final production estimate, and 1 percent above the November 1 forecast. This is the largest production on record, 3 percent above the previous record of 31.9 million tons set in 1994. Harvested acres in the 12 sugar beet producing states is estimated at 1.45 million acres, 2 percent above 1997, but 4,600 acres below the November 1 forecast. Yield is estimated at a record 22.5 tons per acre, 0.2 ton above November 1 and 0.1 ton above the previous record set in 1981 and tied in 1987.

Montana dry bean growers produced an estimated 266,000 cwt in 1998, up 9,000 cwt from 1997 and the highest production since 1947. Growers harvested 12,200 acres with a yield of 21.8 cwt per acre compared with last year's 11,700 acres harvested with a yield of 22.0 cwt per acre.

U.S. production of dry edible beans is estimated at 30.8 million cwt for 1998, 5 percent above 1997 and 9 percent above two years ago. Area for harvest is estimated at 1.91 million acres, up 9 percent from both 1997 and 1996. The average yield, at 1,611 pounds per acre, dropped 59 pounds from 1997.

Fall potato production in Montana totaled 3.18 million cwt, down 4 percent from last year. Producers harvested 10,600 acres compared with 10,400 in 1997. Yields decreased 20 cwt per acre from a year ago to 300 cwt.

Total U.S. 1998 potato production from all four seasons is estimated at 478 million cwt, up 2 percent from 1997 but 4 percent below 1996. Harvested area, at 1.39 million acres, was up 3 percent from 1997. Average yield of 343 cwt per acre was down 2 cwt from the previous year.

All hay harvested in Montana was down 100,000 acres from last year at 2.5 million acres. All hay production was 5.02 million tons down 8 percent or 460,000 tons from a year ago. Alfalfa hay harvested acreage was 1.70 million acres, up 50,000 acres from last season. The average yield was 2.2 tons per acre compared with 2.4 tons per acre in 1997. Other hay harvested acreage was 800,000 and the average yield was 1.6 tons per acre, the same as last year.

U.S. all hay production for 1998 was estimated at 151 million tons, down sightly from the October 1 forecast and 1 percent below the 1997 total. Acreage harvested, at 60.0 million acres, is essentially unchanged from the October forecast and 2 percent below 1997. The average yield, at 2.52 tons per acre, was 1 percent below the October forecast and 1 percent above the previous year.

Montana hay stocks were estimated at 4.57 million tons on December 1, down 9 percent from last year. Montana hay growers seeded an estimated 130,000 acres of alfalfa during 1998, 20,000 acres less than last year. New seedings include those mixed with a nurse crop, other forage, or direct seedings. At the U.S. level 3.55 million acres of alfalfa was newly seeded in 1998.

Production of dry peas in Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, and Washington in 1998 is estimated at 5.93 million cwt, 3 percent more than 1997's production and more than double the 1996 crop. Growers in Montana and North Dakota continue to seed more dry peas while dry pea acres in Idaho and Washington were both below 1997.

Production of lentils in Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, and Washington is estimated at 1.94 million cwt, down 19 percent from the 1997 crop. Harvested area is estimated at 158,500 acres, 24,500 acres less than 1997. Average yield per acre is 1,223 pounds, 92 pounds below last year.

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NEWS

Montana Quarterly Milk Production and U.S. December Milk Production Up

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 15, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Peggy Stringer or Carmen Pennington at 1-800-835-2612.

During the October-December quarter, Montana milk cows produced 73 million pounds of milk, 3 million pounds more than the same quarter a year ago. Montana milk cow numbers, at 18,000 head were unchanged from a year ago.

Milk production in the 20 major States during December totaled 11.4 billion pounds, up 3.0 percent from production in these same States in December 1997. November revised production, at 10.9 billion pounds was up 2.7 percent from November 1997.

Production per cow in the 20 major States averaged 1,478 pounds for December, 40 pounds above December 1997. The number of cows on farms in the 20 major States was 7.74 million head, 12,000 head more than December 1997 but 1,000 head less than November 1998.

During the October - December period, milk produced in the U.S. was 39.1 billion pounds, 2.4 percent above the October-December period last year. The average number of milk cows in the U.S. during the October-December quarter was 9.19 million head, 12,000 head less than the same period last year.

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NEWS

Montanans to Participate in 1999 Childhood Agricultural Injuries Study

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 15, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Bo Turnbow or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana farmers and ranchers will soon be asked to participate in a study on agricultural injuries to children. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control, will be conducting the fourth in a series of studies for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The Childhood Agricultural Injuries Study, with a nationwide sample of 50,000 respondents, will be the largest ever conducted on the subject.

Between January 25 and February 26, approximately 1,500 Montana farmers and ranchers will be contacted over the phone by NASS personnel. Their participation in the survey will help identify the type and prevalence of agricultural injuries to children. Individual responses to the survey are strictly confidential and are used only to prepare aggregated statistics.

Previous studies for NIOSH have gathered information on agricultural injuries to adults. This study will focus on agricultural injuries to children and adolescents up to, but not including individuals, 20 years of age. The bulk of study results will be published by NIOSH. The information gathered will be utilized by countless groups interested in the issues of farm safety and injury prevention.

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NEWS

Final Farm Numbers and Land in Farms Estimates for 1993-1997

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 22, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Curtis Lund or Steve Sakry at 1-800-835-2612.

Number of farms and land in farms estimates are published annually. These data were collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service during the June Agricultural Survey and the Fall Agricultural Survey using sampling procedures to ensure every farm operator had a chance of being selected. In addition, the responsibility for the Census of Agriculture was transferred to NASS from the Census Bureau starting with the 1997 Agricultural Census.

The farm definition for the Census of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) official estimates of farms are now the same. That is, a farm is defined as any establishment from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were sold or would normally be sold during the year. Over the last five years, there have been some substantial changes in the farm definition so that the Census of Agriculture and NASS official series would have the same definition. In addition, new industries were added to both counts because of the implementation of the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

The following changes were made to ensure comparability between the Census of Agriculture data and the annually published NASS estimates. Beginning in 1995, NASS survey interviewers counted operations having five or more horses or ponies and no other agricultural sales as farms. An operation with one or more horses with agricultural sales of at least $1,000 already qualified as a farm on both the NASS survey and the Census. Beginning in 1997, the NASS Fall Agricultural Survey was added to estimate all operations qualifying as a farm during the year which is the Census reference period. Beginning with the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Christmas tree farms and farms that were wholly enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program were included in the Census farm count to coincide with the NASS official estimates. Two new industries, Maple Syrup and Short Rotation Woody Crop farms, were added to both counts beginning in 1997 as a result of NAICS.

All the changes in the farm definition occurring over the last five years were carried back to 1993 and included in the 1993-97 estimates. This "level" change ensured comparability not only between the Census of Agriculture data and the annually published NASS estimates. Because of these changes in the farm definition, the official estimates show a sizeable difference in the number of farms between 1992 and 1993 in some States.

Land in farms is defined as all land operated by farms during the year. It includes crop and livestock acreage, wasteland, woodland, pasture, land in summer fallow, idle cropland, and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and other set aside or commodity acreage programs. It excludes public, industrial, and grazing association land, nonagricultural land and all land operated by establishments not qualifying as farms. The reevaluation of the use of public lands in the West caused some significant changes in land in farms estimates in some States. Public land used as a common grazing area is not considered land in farms, but public land leased solely by a farm or ranch operator is considered as land in farms. There was also some re-determination of the amount of Indian reservation land that was included in land in farms.

Revisions were made after a thorough review of the original survey data and the 1997 Census of Agriculture and account for the definitional changes described in the introduction. The 1993-97 estimates are considered final and will not be revised again. At the National level, revisions to estimates of number of farms in the United States ranged from an increase of 5.7% to 6.4%. The revisions to estimates of land in farms in the United States decreased in range from 0.8% to 1.3%. The revisions were released January 19, 1999 and are also available on the NASS homepage at http://www.nass.usda.gov.

Number of Farms

Year	From	To	Change %
	(Thous)		
1997	2,057,910	2,190,510	+6.4
1996	2,063,910	2,190,500	+6.1
1995	2,071,520	2,196,400	+6.0
1994	2,064,720	2,197,690	+6.4
1993	2,083,430	2,201,590	+5.7

Land in Farms

Year	From	To	Change %
	(Thous)		
1997	968,338	956,010	-1.3
1996	970,048	958,675	-1.2
1995	972,253	962,515	-1.0
1994	973,403	965,935	-0.8
1993	976,463	968,845	-0.8

Montana's number of farms increased as much as 18.2 percent from previous estimates and land in farm estimates declined by as much as 3.0 percent.

Number of Farms

Year	From	To	% Change
1997	24,000	27,000	+12.5
1996	23,000	26,500	+15.2
1995	22,000	26,000	+18.2
1994	22,500	26,000	+15.5
1993	23,800	25,000	+5.0

Land in Farms

Year	From	To	% Change
1997	59,600,000	57,800,000	-3.0
1996	59,700,000	58,500,000	-2.0
1995	59,700,000	59,400,000	-0.5
1994	59,700,000	59,600,000	-0.2
1993	59,800,000	59,900,000	+0.1

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NEWS

Final Cattle and Sheep Estimates for 1993-1997

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 22, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Curtis Lund or Thomas Chard at 1-800-835-2612

The livestock estimates were reviewed by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) for the1993 through 1997 production years. Revisions were made after a thorough review of the original survey data and all additional available data including the 1997 Census of Agriculture. The Agricultural Statistics Board evaluated the current numbers with historic values to ensure comparability with past Census relationships. These estimates are considered final and will not be revised again. The revisions were released January 19, 1999 and are also available on the NASS Homepage at http://www.nass.usda.gov.

Montana's cattle inventory estimates were unchanged from previous estimates. Slight adjustments in class estimates were made, but the total and beef cow inventories remained the same. Nationally, estimates of all cattle and calf crop were changed less than one percent. The 1998 U.S. cattle inventory was increased to 99.744 million head, up from 99.501 head. The U.S. 1997 calf crop was changed to 38.961 million from 38.718 million head.

The 1998 sheep and lambs inventory for Montana was adjusted upward by 5,000 head to 415,000 head, other years were not changed. Sheep shorn and wool production was changed as follows: 1995 head shorn from 468,000 to 458,000, wool production from 5,428,000 to 5,311,000 pound; 1996 head shorn from 434,000 to 419,000, wool production from 3,901,000 to 3,727,000 pounds; 1997 head shorn from 402,000 to 387,000, wool production from 3,851,000 to 3,668,000 pounds. At the National level, revisions to estimates of sheep inventories and lamb crops were less than three percent. The January 1997 inventory was changed to 7.825 million from 7.616 million head and the 1997 lamb crop was changed from 5.245 million to 5.356 million lambs.

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NEWS

1997 Census of Agriculture Release Celebration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 25, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Peggy Stringer or Curtis Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

In an historic move that created a "one-stop" shop for Federal agricultural statistics, the Census of Agriculture program was officially transferred from the U.S. Department of Commerce to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (NASS) with the FY '97 Federal budget in October 1996. Even though the change of hands occurred near the end of the planning phase for the Census and necessitated many changes in the way the Census was collected and processed, NASS, after many hours and much hard work, is releasing the United States Summary data 10 months earlier than ever before.

On February 1, 1999 USDA-NASS will release the 1997 Census of Agriculture. Come help Montana Agricultural Statistics Service celebrate this historic event.

When:	February 1, 1999, 10:00 a.m.
Where:	Federal Building, 301 S. Park, Room 342, Helena, Montana
What:	Join us for refreshments and a tour of data available on the Internet. You will see first hand where you can find Census of Agriculture data for Montana, including state- and county-level statistics, and data for the rest of the country.

Montana Agricultural Statistics Service is proud of the improved quality and speed of delivery of the 1997 Census of Agriculture. We're proud of everyone who worked hard, both individually and cooperatively, to produce the results. And, we're most proud of all the Nation's farm and ranch operators who took a stand to show how much America COUNTS on agriculture. Come, join in the celebration on Monday, February 1, 1999.

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Montana January 1, 1999 Cattle and Calf Inventory Unchanged, US Down

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 29, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Thomas Chard II or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana's cattle and calf inventory was 2.6 million head on January 1, 1999, unchanged from a year ago, according to the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. While the total inventory was unchanged, the inventory of beef cows and beef cow replacements declined and other heifers, milk cow replacements, and bulls increased from last year.

The number of beef cows that had calved, at 1.532 million head, was down 1 percent from January 1, 1998. The number of milk cows in the state remained steady at 18,000 head. Beef heifer replacements, weighing 500 pounds or more, were down 3 percent from the previous year to 340,000 head. However, milk heifer replacements rose 25 percent from the previous year to 10,000 head and other heifers weighing 500 lbs or more, increased 7 percent from last year to 225,000 head. The decrease in beef heifer replacements can be attributed to the poor cattle prices received during the year. The increase in other heifers is partly due to many producers being undecided about whether to breed this years heifers or background and finish them.

Calves weighing less than 500 lbs, at 120,000 head, were unchanged from last year's record low calf inventory. Bulls weighing 500 pounds or more increased 3 percent to 100,000 head. During the past 10 years, bull inventories have continued to trend upward from the 78,000 bulls on hand in 1989. The number of cattle and calves on full feed that will be sent directly to slaughter were down 12 percent from 1998 to 70,000 head. Reduced cattle prices during the year and changes in ownership and contracts for some feedlots resulted in fewer or no cattle being fed compared with a year ago.

During 1998, 1.50 million calves were born in Montana, down 1 percent from 1997. Calving conditions were much improved over the last two years. The number of operations during 1998 with one or more head of cattle in the state rose 400 operations from 1997 to 14,000. The increase is a result of more operations in the 1-49 head and 50-99 head groups. The number of beef cow operations rose from 1997 to 12,700, while the number of operations with one or more milk cows declined to 700.

In the United States, all cattle and calves on January 1, 1999, totaled 98.5 million head, 1 percent below the 99.7 million on January 1, 1998 and 3 percent below the 101.7 million two years ago. All cows and heifers that have calved, at 42.6 million, were 1 percent below the 43.1 million on January 1, 1998 and 3 percent below the 43.8 million two years ago. Beef cows, at 33.5 million, were down 1 percent from January 1, 1998 and 3 percent below two years ago. Milk cows, at 9.14 million, were down 1 percent from January 1, 1998 and 2 percent below two years ago.

Other class estimates on January 1, 1999, and the changes from January 1 last year and two years ago, respectively, are as follows:

- All heifers 500 pounds and over, 19.6 million, down 1 percent and down 3 percent.
- Beef replacement heifers, 5.55 million, down 4 percent and down 8 percent.
- Milk replacement heifers, 4.06 million, up 2 percent and slightly above two years ago .
- Other heifers, 9.99 million, down 1 percent and down 2 percent.
- Steers weighing 500 pounds and over, 16.8 million, down 2 percent and down 3 percent.
- Bulls weighing 500 pounds and over, 2.28 million, slightly above and down 3 percent.
- Calves under 500 pounds, 17.2 million, down 1 percent and down 4 percent.
- All cattle and calves on feed for slaughter, 13.2 million, down 3 percent and slightly above two years ago.

The 1998 U.S. calf crop was estimated at 38.6 million head, down 1 percent from 1997 and down 3 percent from 1996. Calves born during the first half of the year are estimated at 28.4 million, down 1 percent from 1997 and down 3 percent from 1996.

The number of operations with cattle in the United States totaled 1,115,650 during 1998, down 3 percent from 1997 and 5 percent below 1996. Operations with beef cows totaled 855,860 operations in 1998, down 2 percent from 1997 and 3 percent below 1996. Milk cow operations, at 123,700, were 6 percent below last year and 11 percent below two years ago.

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NEWS

January 1, 1999 Sheep and Lamb Inventory Down

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 29, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana's sheep and lamb inventory set a new record low at 380,000 head, down 8 percent from last year. Low prices, predators, and an overall depressed market in 1998 were key factors in the continued decline.

Breeding sheep and lamb numbers decreased 40,000 head from last year to 345,000 head. Ewes one year and older were down 14 percent to 270,000 head. Rams one year and older at 9,000 head, were 10 percent less than the previous year. Replacement lambs at 66,000 head were up 6,000 head from a year ago. The 1998 lamb crop was 355,000 head, a drop of 7 percent from January 1, 1997.

There were 35,000 market sheep and lambs on hand January 1 – all but 1,000 head were market lambs. Of the total market lambs, 6 percent weighed less than 65 pounds, 18 percent weighed 65-84 pounds, 58 percent were in the 85-105 pound category, and 18 percent were over 105 pounds. There were 2,000 sheep and lamb operations in Montana during 1998, 100 less than a year ago.

All sheep and lamb inventory in the United States on January 1, 1999, totaled 7.24 million head, down 8 percent from 1998 and 10 percent below two years ago. Inventory has declined since 1942 when it reached a peak of 56.2 million head.

Breeding sheep inventory declined to 5.31 million head on January 1, 1999, down 5 percent from January 1, 1998's 5.61 million head. Ewes one year old and older, at 4.34 million head, were 5 percent below last year.

Market sheep and lambs on January 1, 1999, totaled 1.92 million head, down 13 percent from January 1, 1998. Market lambs comprised 96 percent of the total. Twenty-six percent were lambs under 65 pounds, 17 percent were 65 - 84 pounds, 27 percent 85 - 105 pounds, 26 percent were over 105 pounds, and 4 percent were market sheep.

The 1998 lamb crop of 5.01 million head was down 6 percent from 1997. This compares with the previous record low of 5.36 million head set a year ago. The 1998 lambing rate was 110 per 100 ewes one year old and older on January 1, 1998, compared with 109 in 1997.

The number of operations with sheep during 1998 totaled 68,810, down 5 percent from 1997 and 10 percent from 1996.

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Agricultural Prices Received for December

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 29, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

The Montana winter wheat average price increased 9 cents from November 1998 to $3.18 per bushel, durum wheat increased 60 cents to $4.36 per bushel, and spring wheat increased 17 cents to $3.62 per bushel. Feed barley was up 13 cents per bushel to $1.49, and malt barley was down 10 cents to $2.82 per bushel.

The mid-January price for alfalfa hay was $70.00 per ton, the same as last month, and the other hay price of $58.00 decreased $3.00 from December. The mid-month winter wheat price averaged $3.10 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.50, feed barley price was $1.45, and malt barley $2.80.

Livestock prices for the full month of December were mixed. Steer and heifer prices increased 40 cents to $71.40 per cwt. Cows were up 50 cents to $30.60 and the average price for calves increased $1.30 to $77.70 per cwt. Sheep prices increased $7.20 to $32.70 per cwt and lambs increased $3.00 to $71.60 per cwt. Milk prices increased 60 cents from last month to $17.60 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-January averaged $73.50 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for December and changes from November were as follows: winter wheat was $2.67, down 11 cents, spring wheat was $3.26, unchanged, the all barley price was $2.00, down 2 cents, steer and heifer prices were $60.30, down $2.00.

The U.S. mid-January winter wheat price was $2.71 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.20 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.86 per bushel, all barley was $1.99, steer and heifer prices were $62.40 per cwt, cow prices were $33.10, all hog prices were $25.70 per cwt, and market egg prices were 58.2 cents per dozen.

The All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in January was 98 based on 1990-92=100, down 1 point (1.0 percent) from December. Price increases from December for hogs, tomatoes, cattle, and oranges more than offset price decreases for turkeys, milk, lettuce, and broilers. The seasonal changes in the mix of commodities farmers sell also affect the overall index level. Lower seasonal marketings of cotton, milk, tobacco, and cottonseed more than offset the relatively higher marketings of corn, soybeans, cattle, and rice. These seasonal marketing changes more than offset an increase in prices and accounted for the one point decline in the overall index.

Compared with January 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 5 points (4.9 percent) lower. Price decreases from January 1998 for corn, soybeans, hogs, and cattle more than offset price increases for milk, broilers, oranges, and tomatoes.

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Important Study Measures the Financial Health of U.S. Agriculture

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 29, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi for questions regarding wheat or Carmen Pennington for all others at 1-800-835-2612

How are the current market conditions and changes in farm programs affecting the financial health of U.S. agriculture? What does it cost to produce grain, livestock and other commodities? To gather reliable, objective information to address these and other issues, the Agricultural Resource Management Study will be conducted by the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service.

Agricultural income and expenses, assets and liabilities, cost of producing various commodities, and operation characteristics are some of the topics to be measured during a survey being conducted between February 24th and the end of March 1999. Fewer than 20,000 of the nation's two million farm and ranch operators will be asked to participate in the study, so every response is critical. Approximately 340 producers in Montana will be included in this important study.

The agricultural producers selected to participate in the Agricultural Resource Management Study will be making an important contribution to the overall welfare of the U.S. agricultural community. This is the only study which objectively measures the current financial situation of our farms and ranches. The study will examine the changing role of farm and off-farm employment, management practices, and evaluate the affects of adverse weather in 1998 on producers' net income and cash flow. Additionally, selected participants will be asked to provide detailed cost of production information on wheat to help analyze these important commodities.

Montana producers selected to participate in this year's Agricultural Resource Management Study will be notified by letter and interviewers will visit them personally between February 24th and the end of March to complete the report. USDA will publish the results of this study later this year in a series of reports on the farm financial situation. The study results will be used by government policy makers, commodity analysts, producer organizations, and others to benefit farmers and the rural community.

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Most U.S. Farmers Have Heard of the Year 2000 Problem

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 10, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Peggy Stringer or Curtis Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

Eighty-one percent of U.S. farmers have heard of the Year 2000 (Y2K) computer systems problems and 68 percent realize that it could impact their automated farm systems. The Y2K problem is where some computerized systems may fail because two digits have been used to represent the year instead of four, such as 98 for 1998. The computer may not be able to determine if the year 00 is1900 or 2000. The Y2K problem could cause computerized systems to malfunction, give erroneous results, or result in a complete system failure.

The number of farmers using automated systems of any type is 32 percent. The most common types of systems used on farms are for record keeping and are used by 29 percent of farmers. Of the farmers using any type of automated system, 55 percent have inventoried their systems for Y2K problems and 31 percent of the inventoried systems had a problem. A solution is in process or completed for ninety-two percent of the systems identified with a problem. Of those farmers who have either fixed or are attempting to fix Y2K problems, 54 percent estimate the cost of fixing the problem will be less than $1,000. Twenty-two percent were unable to estimate the cost of fixing the problem.

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1998 Crop Values

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 12, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

The value of Montana's 1998 all wheat crop fell more than 15 percent from 1997 to $554.3 million. Total production was down seven percent and the season average price dropped 27 cents per bushel. The 1998 season average price for all wheat was $3.35 per bushel compared with the 1997 price of $3.62.

The estimated value of Montana's winter wheat crop fell 26 percent from the previous year to $138.9 million. The lowest production since 1988 and a lower season average price resulted in the large decrease. Spring wheat's value of production, estimated at $367.2 million, was down 14 percent from 1997. The season average price fell 18 cents to $3.40 and the lower production reduced the total value of the crop. Durum wheat's season average price decreased $1.18 from 1997 to $4.00, but the total 1998 value of production, at $48.2 million bushels was up 23 percent from 1997. The 60 percent increase in production offset the lower price to increase the value of production.

Total value of production for barley was estimated at $129.6 million, down 25 percent from the previous year. The 1998 season average price, at $2.25, was down 58 cents from 1997. Lower production in 1998 and lower average price resulted in the lower production value.

The season average price for all hay decreased $5.50 from last year to $73.50 per ton. Lower production and price reduced the value of production 14 percent to $360.6 million. Alfalfa hay's 1998 season average price was estimated at $74.50, down $5.50 from last year while other hay's season average price decreased $5.00 to $64.00.

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1998 Alfalfa Seed Production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 17, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Alfalfa seed production for 1998 was estimated at 4.95 million pounds, up significantly from the 3.54 millions pounds produced in 1997. Harvested acres increased to 18,000, up from the revised 13,500 acres harvested in 1997. The acreage harvested during 1997 was revised upward after review of the Census of Agriculture information, but the production level was not changed. The state average yield was estimated at 275 pounds per acre, up from 262 pounds a year ago. Irrigated yields averaged 375 pounds per acre and non-irrigated yields averaged 110 pounds per acre.

Producers used an average of 1.3 gallons of leaf cutter bees per acre on all acres harvested for alfalfa seed in 1998, compared with 1.5 gallons per acre in 1997. The 1997 number was reduced because of revisions to harvested acres.

Proprietary varieties made up 60 percent of this year's production, down 12 points from 1997. Common uncertified varieties accounted for 40 percent of the production and common certified varieties represented less than 1 percent.

The average price received for the 1998 crop was $1.17 per pound, down 8 cents from 1997's average price.

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1998 Montana Sheep and Lamb Losses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 19, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

Montana sheep producers lost 67,000 sheep and lambs to weather, predators, disease and other causes during 1998, representing a total value of more than $3.6 million, according to a survey conducted by the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. The total number of sheep and lambs lost dropped 21 percent from 1997 and the total value of inventory lost in 1998 fell 39 percent. Extremely low market prices this past year resulted in a significant decrease in the value of sheep and lambs. The reduction in sheep and lamb losses is partly due to less severe weather in 1998 and lower sheep and lamb inventories which were 4 percent lower than the previous year. With sheep numbers declining there is a natural decline in sheep and lamb losses. The percentage of total sheep and lambs lost due to weather in 1998 is 62 percent less than 1997. Sheep and lamb deaths amounted to 8.4 percent of the January 1 inventory and lambs born -- slightly less than the previous year.

Predators caused an estimated $1.1 million in losses in 1998, down from $1.8 million the previous year. Losses due to predators amounted to 2.7 percent of the January 1, 1998 inventory plus the lambs born in 1998 and 33 percent of all sheep and lamb deaths. Coyotes remained the largest predator for both sheep and lambs. Coyotes accounted for 68 percent of the predator caused losses and 22 percent of all death losses in the state. The value of losses attributed to coyotes was $759,000. The number of sheep and lambs lost to all predators totaled 21,800 head, down 5,200 head from last year. Lamb losses by all predators amounted to 17,700 head, down 21 percent from last year. The number of sheep lost to all predators totaled 4,100, down 500 head from a year ago.

The total value of non-predatory losses was $2.2 million in 1998, compared with $3.6 million the previous year. Non-predatory losses accounted for 58 percent of all losses. The largest non-predatory cause of losses were weather conditions at 10,000 head. Sheep lost to non-predatory factors totaled 13,800 head, 22 percent lower than 1997. Non-predatory lamb losses came in at 24,900 head, 20 percent lower than a year ago.

Fewer producers reported sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes. This resulted in a 27 percent decrease in the number of sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes from last year. Lambs lost to unknown causes totaled 4,400 head, 1,900 head lower than 1997. Unknown causes claimed 2,100 sheep, 500 less head than last year. The value of sheep and lambs lost to unknown causes decreased $266,900 from last year to $360,200.

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Farms and Land in Farms for 1998

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 26, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana's number of farms for 1998 was estimated at 27,500, up 500 from the 1997 revised estimate of 27,000 and land in farms is estimated at 57.5 million acres. The average size of farm is 2,091 acres.

The number of farms in the United States in 1998 is estimated at 2.19 million, up fractionally from 1997. Total land in farms is 953.8 million acres, down 2.2 million acres from last year. The decline in land in farms continues to follow historical trends. The average farm size decreased 1 acre from 1997 to 435 acres.

The West Region showed the largest increase in number of farms, up 4,500 farms or 1.5 percent. The largest decrease was in the North Central Region with a loss of 3,500 farms or 0.4 percent.

Eleven States increased in farm numbers while 10 States decreased from a year ago. California showed the largest increase with 2,000 farms while Texas, Georgia, Washington, and Ohio showed increases of 1,000 farms from last year. Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Kentucky, Iowa, and North Carolina had decreases of 1,000 farms each.

Texas remained the State with the most farms at 226,000, up 1,000 from a year earlier. Missouri was second with 110,000 farms, the same as last year, followed by Iowa with 97,000 farms, down 1,000 from 1997.

Texas continued to lead the nation in land in farms and ranches with 131.5 million acres, unchanged from 1997. There were 13 States with decreases of 100,000 acres or more in agricultural land from a year ago.

The U.S. number of farms in the economic sales class between $1,000-$9,999 increased 1,150 farms during 1998 to 1,192,200. Those with sales in the $10,000-$99,999 class decreased 3,760 farms from 1997 to 642,200 in 1998. The $100,000 and over sales class increased 3,610 farms from 1997 to 357,110 farms in 1998. These changes in the sales class mix of farms continues the trend of losing farms in the $10,000-$99,999 sales class, while gaining farms in both the $1,000-$9,999 and the $100,000 and over sales classes.

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Agricultural Prices Received for January

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 26, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

The Montana winter wheat average price was $2.68 per bushel, durum wheat was $3.17 per bushel, and spring wheat was $3.21 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.51, and malt barley was $2.92 per bushel.

The mid-February price for alfalfa hay was $64.00 per ton, down $6.00 from last month, and the other hay price of $57.00 decreased $1.00 from January. The mid-month winter wheat price averaged $2.70 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.30, feed barley price was $1.40, and malt barley $2.90.

Livestock prices for the full month of January mostly higher. Steer and heifer prices increased $3.10 to $74.50 per cwt. Cows were up $3.30 to $33.90 and the average price for calves increased $6.20 to $83.90 per cwt. Sheep prices decreased $3.30 to $29.40 per cwt and lambs increased $1.50 to $73.10 per cwt. Milk prices decreased $1.00 from last month to $16.60 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-February averaged $76.80 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for January and changes from December were as follows: winter wheat was $2.67, unchanged, spring wheat was $3.07, down 19 cents, the all barley price was $1.84, down 16 cents, steer and heifer prices were $62.20, up $1.90.

The U.S. mid-February winter wheat price was $2.52 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.07 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.72 per bushel, all barley was $1.94, steer and heifer prices were $63.20 per cwt, cow prices were $34.60, all hog prices were $28.10 per cwt, and market egg prices were 50.1 cents per dozen.

The All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in February was 96 based on 1990-92=100, down 1 point (1.0 percent) from January. Price decreases from January for milk, soybeans, tomatoes, and corn more than offset price increases for cattle, hogs, oranges, and potatoes. The seasonal changes in the mix of commodities farmers sell also affect the overall index level. Higher seasonal marketings of milk, cattle, broilers, and eggs more than offset the relatively lower marketings of corn, soybeans, tobacco, and cotton. These seasonal marketing changes limited the decline in the overall index.

Compared with February 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 5 points (5.0 percent) lower. Price decreases from February 1998 for corn, soybeans, hogs, and wheat more than offset price increases for milk, oranges, broilers, and almonds.

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Montana Honey Production Up 9 Percent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 26, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Bo Turnbow or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana's honey producers with five or more colonies produced 14.0 million pounds of honey in 1998, up 9 percent from the previous year. There were 115,000 colonies producing honey in 1998, compared with 107,000 colonies in 1997. The yield of honey per colony was 122 pounds per colony, a slight increase from the previous year's yield of 120 pounds per colony. Stocks on hand on December 15, 1998 totaled 5.5 million pounds, up 29 percent from 1997.

Prices for Montana honey averaged 64 cents per pound in 1998 compared with 74 cents per pound in 1997. The value of honey production in 1998 was 9.0 million dollars, down 6 percent from the 1997 honey crop.

Montana had the second highest yield per colony in the nation in 1998. Montana also ranked fifth in the nation in honey production and value of production, and seventh in the number of honey producing colonies.

The Nation's honey production in 1998 from producers with five or more colonies totaled 220 million pounds, up 12 percent from 1997. There were 2.63 million colonies producing honey in 1998, up slightly from 1997. Yield per colony averaged 83.7 pounds, up 9.0 pounds from the 74.7 pounds in 1997. Colonies which produced in more than one state were counted in each state and yields per colony may therefore be understated. Colonies were not counted if honey was not harvested. Producer honey stocks were 80.8 million pounds on December 15, 1998, up 14 percent from a year earlier.

Prices for the 1998 crop averaged 65.5 cents per pound, down 13 percent from 75.2 cents in 1997. Prices are based on retail sales by producers and sales to private processors and co-ops. At the state level, prices reflect the portions of honey sold retail, co-op and private. At the U.S. level, prices for each color are derived by weighting quantities sold for each marketing channel. Co-op and private prices were lower for all color classes in 1998.

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1998 Montana and U.S. Wool Production Down

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 25, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Tom Chard or Carmen Pennington at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana wool growers produced 3.4 million pounds of wool during 1998, down 6 percent from 1997, according to the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. The 1998 average price per pound of wool decreased 23 cents to 78 cents per pound, causing the value of all wool produced to decrease 27 percent from the previous year to $2.7 million. The total head shorn decreased 5 percent to 367,000 head. The average fleece weight dropped from 9.4 pounds in 1997 to 9.3 pounds in 1998.

Shorn wool production in the United States during 1998 was 49.2 million pounds, down 8 percent from 1997. Sheep and lambs shorn totaled 6.43 million head, a decrease of 8 percent from 1997. The average price paid for wool sold in 1998 was $0.60 per pound for a total value of $29.4 million dollars, down 35 percent from $44.9 million dollars in 1997.

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Agricultural Prices Received for February

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 30, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of February showed some improvement. The Montana winter wheat average price was $2.92 per bushel, up 24 cents from January's level; durum wheat was $3.13 per bushel, down 4 cents; and spring wheat was 5 cents higher at $3.26 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.46 and malt barley was $2.58 per bushel.

The mid-March price for alfalfa hay was $60.00 per ton, down $4.00 from last month, and the other hay price of $52.00 decreased $5.00 from February. The mid-month winter wheat price averaged $2.90 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.30, feed barley price was $1.30, and malt barley averaged $2.50.

Livestock prices for the full month of February are mostly higher. Steer and heifer prices increased $1.90 to $76.40 per cwt. Cows were up $2.30 to $36.20 and the average price for calves increased $1.80 to $85.70 per cwt. Sheep prices increased $1.70 to $31.10 per cwt, but lambs dropped $4.00 to $69.10 per cwt. Milk prices increased $0.90 from last month to $17.50 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-March averaged $73.30 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for February and changes from January were as follows: winter wheat was $2.56, down 11 cents; spring wheat was $3.10, up 3 cents; the all barley price was unchanged at $1.84, and steer and heifer prices were $63.60, up $1.40.

The U.S. mid-March winter wheat price was $2.56 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.10 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.74 per bushel, all barley was $1.86. Steer and heifer prices were $65.50 per cwt, cow prices were $34.70, all hog prices were $26.50 per cwt, and market egg prices were 53.1 cents per dozen.

The All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in March was 97 based on1990-92=100, up 1 point (1.0 percent) from February. This is a usual February to March increase due to the seasonal changes in the mix of commodities farmers sell. Higher seasonal marketings of strawberries, milk, broilers, and tomatoes more than offset the relatively lower marketings of cattle, cotton, oranges, and corn. Price decreases from February for milk, soybeans, broilers, and hogs more than offset price increases for cattle, lettuce, oranges, and eggs.

Compared with March 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 5 points (4.9 percent) lower. Price decreases from March 1998 for soybeans, corn, hogs, and wheat more than offset price increases for milk, lettuce, strawberries, and carrots.

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March 1999 Prospective Plantings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 31, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana **spring wheat** producers expect to seed 4.2 million acres in 1999, and if these expectations hold, seedings would be up 11 percent from last year, and would be the third highest seeding on record. Low prices and lack of fall moisture prompted producers to reduce winter wheat seeding last fall, but increased the number of acres to be seeded in the spring. **Winter wheat** seedings remained unchanged from the December estimate at 1.05 million acres, down 350,000 from last year and the smallest acreage since 1941. Lower prices are expected to reduce **durum wheat** acreage to 380,000 acres, down 16 percent from last year's 450,000 acres seeded. The 1998 seeded acreage was the largest acreage seeded since 1981. Adding the winter wheat seeded last fall to the other spring and durum wheat intended seedings shows 5.63 million acres of **all wheat**, down less than 1 percent from last year's acreage, but 8 percent below 1997.

Barley intentions are estimated at 1.2 million acres, down 11 percent from last year. The intended **oats** acreage is 150,000 acres, up 10,000 acres from 1998, and growers expect to harvest half of this crop for grain, 25 percent more than last year. **Corn** intentions are estimated at 60,000 acres, unchanged from last year. **Sugar beet** acreage is estimated at 64,000 acres, unchanged from 1998. **Dry bean** intentions are up 5 percent at 13,200 acres. An estimated 2.5 million acres of **hay** are expected to be harvested, which equals 1998's harvested acreage.

Nationally, **other spring wheat** growers intend to plant 15.4 million acres this year, down 2 percent from 1998. This would be the smallest area since 1988. About 14.5 million acres of the total are Hard Red Spring wheat, also down 2 percent. Spring wheat prices are the lowest in several years. Despite current prices most states are increasing area planted from a year ago. However, the announced CRC Durum program, along with using alternative crops to break disease chains, has reduced North Dakota's intended area dramatically, causing the U.S. decline. **Winter wheat** planted area for harvest in 1999 remains at 43.4 million acres. This is down 7 percent from 1998. Class acreages are also unchanged from the seedings report. Some minor, offsetting Soft Red area changes did occur after mid-December. Area seeded to **durum wheat** is expected to reach 4.27 million acres this year, up 12 percent from 1998 and the largest total since 1982. The CRC announced for Durum has spurred planting intentions in the Dakotas despite low prices. The South Dakota acreage is the largest in ten years. Seeding in the Imperial Valley of California progressed normally through February.

U. S. **barley** growers intend to seed 5.27 million acres for 1999, down 17 percent from the 6.34 million acres seeded a year ago. Barley growers in North Dakota and Minnesota are decreasing seedings by 500,000 and 190,000 acres, respectively. Of the 27 States that estimate barley acreage, 17 States are seeding fewer acres, six States are showing no change, and four States are increasing acres. **Oats** seeded and to be seeded by U.S. farmers for the 1999 crop year are expected to total 4.73 million acres, down 200,000 acres from last years final planted acres. Growers expect to harvest 2.69 million acres for grain in 1999, down 3 percent from 1998. If intentions are realized, this would be the second lowest planted acres recorded since 1866, exceeding only the 1996 acreage of 4.64 million acres. Acres intended to be harvested for grain would also be the second lowest on record, above the 2.66 million acres harvested in 1996.

Dry Bean producers intend to plant 2.05 million acres of dry beans in 1999, up 2 percent from last year and up 9 percent from two years ago. **Corn** growers nationally, intend to plant 78.2 million acres of corn for all purposes in 1999, down 2 percent from both last year and 1997. If these intentions materialize, this would be the lowest planted acreage since 1995. Expected acreages are down in the upper Midwest, Southwest, Texas, and Southeast due to a shift to other crops. Intended acreage is up slightly in the central Corn Belt due in part to land coming back into production after flooding in 1998. The area planted to **sugar beets** is expected to total 1.55 million acres in the 12 producing states. If grower's intentions are realized, planted acreage will be 3.3 percent above last year. Relatively lower prices for alternative crops was cited for the increase in acres.

Hay producers expect to harvest 60.1 million acres of hay in 1999, compared to 60.0 million acres in 1998. Acreage declines in 24 States were more than offset by the increases in 14 States. With recent rains in many areas, Texas, up 14 percent, may return to a more normal crop year. In ten states no change in hay acreage is expected.

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March 1, 1999 Grain Stocks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 31, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

All wheat stocks in Montana on March 1, 1999 were estimated at 105.2 million bushels, up 1.2 million bushels from the same quarter last year. Stocks stored on the farm accounted for 86.0 million bushels and the remaining 19.2 million bushels were stored off farm. All **spring wheat** stocks, at 70.7 million bushels, were down 4% from last year and represent 67% of the total wheat stocks. Winter wheat stocks were estimated at 34.5 million bushels, up from 30.4 million bushels last year. **Durum wheat** stocks were estimated at 8.28 million bushels, more than doubling the stocks held March 1, 1998. All wheat disappearance for the December - February quarter was 55.3 million bushels, compared with 45.3 million for the same quarter last year. **Barley** stocks in all positions on March 1, 1999 totaled 25.6 million bushels, up 19 percent from a year ago. The barley disappearance for the December - February quarter was 14.5 million bushels, compared with 14.7 million for the same quarter last year. **Oats** stocks in all positions were estimated at 1.9 million bushels, up 9% from last year.

Nationally, **all wheat** stored in all positions on March 1, 1999 totaled 1.44 billion bushels, up 24 percent from a year ago to the biggest March number since 1988. Farm stocks were 470 million bushels, up 18 percent from last year. Off-farm stocks, at 975 million bushels, were up 27 percent. Disappearance for the quarter ending March 1 was 451 million bushels, down slightly from the same period in 1998. **Durum wheat** stocks in all positions on March 1, 1999 total 88.2 million bushels, more than double last March 1. Like all wheat, this is the biggest March inventory since 1988. On-farm stocks are 58.2 million bushels, up 165 percent from last year. Off-farm stocks total 30.0 million bushels, up 47 percent. The indicated third quarter disappearance of 20.8 million bushels is down 16 percent from the same period a year earlier.

U.S. **barley** stocks in all positions on March 1, 1999 totaled 200 million bushels, up 11 percent from a year ago. Of the total barley stocks on hand, 86.9 million bushels were stored on farms, 6 percent above a year ago. March 1, 1999 off-farm stocks, at 114 million bushels, were 15 percent above last year. Indicated disappearance during the December-February quarter totaled 70 million bushels, 10 percent above the same period a year earlier.

Oats stored in all positions for the U.S. on March 1, 1999 totaled 109 million bushels, 2 percent below a year ago. Of the total stocks on hand, 62 million bushels were stored on farm, 5 percent above this time last year. Off-farm stocks totaled 48 million bushels, 9 percent below a year earlier. Indicated disappearance during the December-February quarter totaled 34 million bushels, 3 percent more than the same period a year ago.

Nationally, **corn** stocks in all positions on March 1, 1999, totaled 5.70 billion bushels, up 15 percent from March 1, 1998. Of the total stocks, 3.57 billion bushels were stored on farms, up 20 percent from a year ago. Off-farm stocks, at 2.13 billion bushels, were up 8 percent from a year ago. The December 1998-February 1999 indicated disappearance is 2.36 billion bushels, 2 percent above the disappearance of 2.31 billion bushels during the same period a year earlier.

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Montana and U.S. Average Farm Real Estate Values Rise

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 6, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Tom Chard at 1-800-835-2612.

The January 1, 1999 farm real estate values in Montana, including land and buildings, averaged $296 per acre, according to the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. This is a slight increase over the previous year's value of $294 per acre. In the last 10 years, the average Montana farm real estate value has grown from $202 to $296 per acre, an increase of 47 percent.

The average value of all cropland in Montana rose $2 during 1998 to a value of $465 per acre. The average value of irrigated cropland remained unchanged at $1,310 per acre. However, the value of non-irrigated cropland was $345 per acre, a $2 increase over last year The average value of pasture increased $3 from 1998, to $200 per acre.

The January 1, 1999 U.S. farm real estate value, including land and buildings, averaged $992 per acre up 1.8 percent from 1998. The average U.S. farm real estate value rose $18 per acre from $974 in 1998 to $992 per acre, the smallest increase since 1992. The 1999 increase continued the climb in farm real estate values that began in 1987.

Regional increases in the values of farm real estate during 1998 ranged from 0.3 to 3.5 percent. The Northeast Region, with its urban influences, had the highest average value of land and buildings at $2,320 per acre. The Lake and Appalachian regions, at $1,320 and $1,780 per acre, showed the largest percentage gains at 3.1 and 3.5 percent, respectively, from 1998. The Delta region, at $1,150, surpassed the previous high set back in 1981 of $1,146. All other regions continued to post record highs with the exceptions of the Corn Belt, Southern and Northern Plains which have yet to surpass the highs of the early 1980's. The Corn Belt region which has shown the largest gains in this decade was up 2.3 percent for 1998, the smallest year to year change since 1990. The Southern Plains have had the least amount of gain during the decade and were up 0.3 percent from 1998, the lowest gain since 1992.

The average value of cropland in the U.S. rose 2.2 percent during 1998 to a value of $1,370 per acre. The largest percentage increase, at 3.5 percent, was in the Appalachian region, while the Southern Plains showed a slight decrease of 0.2 percent. Cropland values were highest in the Pacific region at $3,170 per acre and lowest in the Northern Plains at $656 per acre.

The average value of pasture in the U.S. increased 1.0 percent during 1998, with most States showing small increase or no change. Pasture values were highest in the Northeast at $2,060 per acre and lowest in the Northern Plains at $218 per acre.

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Agricultural Prices Received for March

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 30, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of March declined from February. Montana winter wheat average price was $2.80 per bushel, down 12 cents from February's level; durum wheat was $2.88 per bushel, down 25 cents; and spring wheat was 11 cents lower at $3.15 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.39 and malt barley was $2.39 per bushel.

The mid-April price for alfalfa hay was $61.00 per ton, up $1.00 from last month, but the other hay price of $52.00 was unchanged from March. The mid-month winter wheat price averaged $2.80 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.10, feed barley price was $1.40, and malt barley averaged $2.30.

Livestock prices for the full month of March were mixed. Steer and heifer prices decreased $2.70 to $73.70 per cwt. Cows were up $1.50 to $37.70 and the average price for calves decreased 70 cents to $85.00 per cwt. Sheep and lamb prices both increased 80 cents to $31.90 and $69.90 per cwt, respectively. Milk prices decreased 90 cents from last month to $16.60 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-April averaged $73.20 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for March and changes from February were as follows: winter wheat was $2.53, down 3 cents; spring wheat was $3.01, down 9 cents; the all barley price was $1.92, up 8 cents; and steer and heifer prices were $65.50, up $1.90.

The U.S. mid-April winter wheat price was $2.51 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.78 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.71 per bushel, all barley was $1.80. Steer and heifer prices were $65.30 per cwt, cow prices were $35.10, all hog prices were $30.50 per cwt, and market egg prices were 43.2 cents per dozen.

The All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in April was 98 based on 1990-92=100, up 1 point (1.0 percent) from March. The increase is due to the seasonal change in the mix of commodities farmers sell. The normal increase in marketings of strawberries, cattle, oranges, and milk more than offset the relatively lower marketings of soybeans, corn, wheat, and hogs. The change in marketings also more than offset a decline in overall prices. Price decreases from March for milk, eggs, broilers, and corn more than offset price increases for lettuce, hogs, onions, and carrots.

Compared with April 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 6 points (5.8 percent) lower. Price decreases from April 1998 for hogs, milk, corn and soybeans more than offset price increases for strawberries, carrots, lettuce, and grapefruit.

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Montanans to Participate in 1999 Childhood Agricultural Injuries Study

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 4, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Bo Turnbow or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

In January, 1999 approximately 1,500 Montana farmers and ranchers participated in a study for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) concerning injuries to children. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control, conducted the survey. NASS will release the results of the survey by the end of the year.

Individuals that participated in January's study and had at least one child in their household between the ages of 7 and 16 were asked to participate in a follow-on survey over the next 18 months. This research study involves the use of a new resource to assist parents in making decisions about the involvement of their children in farm tasks. Individual responses to the survey are strictly confidential and are used only to prepare aggregated statistics. The research is a joint project of the National Farm Medicine Center, Queen's University, and the University of California-Davis.

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Agricultural Survey Is an Opportunity to Provide the Facts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 27, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

How many acres will be planted to wheat? What will spring planting conditions mean for American agriculture? To gather reliable, objective information, the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture will be surveying farmers and ranchers for the June Agricultural Survey.

There is always speculation about each new crop season and agricultural producers are the main source for the facts. "If we speak up and answer the questions about the 1999 crop season, we can reduce uncertainty in the agriculture marketplace," says Randy Johnson, Montana Grain Growers Association.

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service will be conducting the survey and a representative will contact local producers between May 24 and June 14. This survey is particularly vital because it will provide the first clear indications of the potential production of major commodities in 1999.

The information gathered is widely used. Producers rely on the data to reach valid production, marketing, and investment decisions. Industry analysts, extension agents, and farm organizations use the information in a variety of ways that benefit farmers.

"We safeguard the confidentiality of all survey responses," Peggy Stringer says. "Information from individual operations is combined with other responses to provide the needed data." NASS works with farmers and ranchers to provide meaningful, accurate, and objective statistics that help keep U.S. agriculture informed.

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May 1 Crop Production and Hay Stocks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 12, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

As of May 1, **Montana winter wheat** producers were expecting a yield of 40 bushels per acre, up 1 bushel from last year. If realized, total production of 40.0 million bushels would be 18 percent less than a year ago due to a decrease in acreage. Dry conditions and low grain prices last fall led producers to plant 1.05 million acres, the smallest winter wheat crop since 1937. Producers expect to harvest 1.0 million acres which would be the smallest harvested acreage since 1939. The condition of the winter wheat crop was rated at 2 percent very poor, 6 percent poor, 35 percent fair, 53 percent good, and 4 percent excellent for the week ending May 9.

U.S. winter wheat production is forecast at 1.61 billion bushels, down 14 percent from 1998. Based on conditions around May 1, the U.S. yield is forecast at 44.4 bushels per acre, 2.5 bushels less than last year's record high. Grain area totals 36.3 million acres, down 9 percent from last season. All classes of winter wheat are down from the previous estimate with soft red winter wheat showing the smallest percentage drop.

Montana hay producers had an estimated 1.10 million tons of hay on hand as of May 1, 4 percent less than the same time last year. Disappearance from December 1998 to May 1, 1999 totaled 3.46 million tons.

U.S. stocks of **all hay** on farms totaled 24.8 million tons on May 1, 1999, up 14 percent from May 1 of the previous year. Disappearance of hay from December 1, 1998 - May 1, 1999, totaled 87.0 million tons, 7.2 percent higher than the 1997 crop disappearance of 81.2 million tons for the same period. Stocks of hay on May 1, 1999, were higher compared with last year in 33 of the 48 estimating states. Mild winter conditions, combined with good hay production, led to stocks increases across much of the nation. Florida and the Southern Plains were adversely affected by drought conditions and showed sharp decreases in hay stocks.

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1998 Agricultural Chemical Use Estimates for Winter and Spring Wheat

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 21, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

Montana winter wheat producers applied nitrogen fertilizer to 90 percent of the acreage planted for the 1998 crop, according to the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. A total of 67.9 million pounds of nitrogen fertilizer was applied to the 1.40 million acres of winter wheat planted in Montana . Of the planted area, 88 percent received phosphate fertilizer while potash was used on 31 percent of the acres. Total application of phosphate was 30.7 million pounds and potash was 5.1 million pounds.

Montana winter wheat producers applied 889,000 pounds of herbicides to 89 percent of the planted winter wheat acres in 1998. The most common herbicide used was 2, 4-D with 66 percent of the acreage sprayed. Dicamba and Glyphosate were the next popular herbicides used at 37 and 29 percent, respectively, of the planted acreage covered.

Montana spring wheat producers planted 3.8 million acres of spring wheat in 1998. Sixty-one percent of these acres had nitrogen fertilizer applied to them. A total of 129.6 million pounds of nitrogen was applied. Phosphate was applied to 55 percent and potash to 22 percent of the planted spring wheat acreage. Total application of phosphate was 64.5 million pounds and potash was 10.3 million pounds.

Montana spring wheat producers applied 1.8 million pounds of herbicides to 81 percent of the total spring wheat acres planted in 1998. The most widely used herbicide was 2, 4-D with 57 percent of the acreage sprayed. Dicamba was the second most common herbicide used on 21 percent. Glyphosate was used on 17 percent of the planted acres.

Winter wheat producers applied nitrogen fertilizer to 89 percent of the area planted for 1998 harvest in the surveyed States. Phosphate fertilizers were applied to 63 percent of the collective acreage, ranging from just 9 percent in Oregon to Ohio's 93 percent. All surveyed States treated at least a portion of the acreage with herbicides; 2,4-D was again the most prevalent in terms of area and total application.

Nitrogen fertilizer was applied to 94 percent of all spring wheat acreage in the surveyed Durum states and 87 percent in the other spring states. Phosphate coverage was similar in both crops, at 76 percent and 77 percent for Durum and other spring plantings, respectively. The three most popular herbicides in terms of Durum area covered were 2,4-D, dicamba, and tribenuron-methyl in that order. However, MCPA and fenoxaprop were second and third behind 2,4-D on other spring fields.

The agricultural chemical use estimates in this report refer to on-farm use of commercial fertilizers and pesticides on the targeted crops for the 1998 crop year. Farm and ranch operators were enumerated late in the growing season or after the farm operator had indicated that planned applications were completed. The data was compiled from two surveys conducted in the Fall of 1998: The Agricultural Resources Management Study (ARMS) and the Fall Area Survey (FAS).

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Agricultural Prices Received for April

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 28, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of April were mostly lower than March prices. Montana winter wheat average price was $2.92 per bushel, up 12 cents from March's level; durum wheat was $2.80 per bushel, down 8 cents; and spring wheat was 3 cents lower at $3.12 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.42 and malt barley was $2.38 per bushel.

The mid-May price for alfalfa hay was $60.00 per ton, down $1.00 from last month. Other hay, at $48.00, was $4.00 per ton lower than April's price. The mid-month winter wheat price averaged $2.80 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.10; feed barley price was $1.35; and malt barley averaged $2.35.

Livestock prices for the full month of April were lower. Steer and heifer prices decreased $1.30 to $72.40 per cwt. Cows were down 60 cents to $37.10 and the average price for calves decreased 30 cents to $84.70 per cwt. Sheep prices decreased $4.10 to $27.80 per cwt. and lamb prices decreased 70 cents to $69.20 per cwt. Milk prices decreased $4.00 from last month to $12.60 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-May averaged $72.80 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for April and changes from March were as follows: winter wheat was $2.48, down 5 cents; spring wheat was $2.95, down 6 cents; the all barley price was $1.77, down 15 cents; and steer and heifer prices were $66.00, up 50 cents.

The U.S. mid-May winter wheat price was $2.42 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.94 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.58 per bushel, all barley was $1.78. Steer and heifer prices were $64.50 per cwt, cow prices were $36.30, all hog prices were $37.00 per cwt, and market egg prices were 35.0 cents per dozen.

The All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in May was 99 based on 1990-92=100, up 3 points (3.1 percent) from April. The index increase was due to the seasonal change in the mix of commodities farmers sell. The normal increase in marketings of cantaloupes, grapes, peaches, and sweet corn in May more than offset the relatively lower marketings of cattle, milk, cotton, and oranges. The change in marketings was accompanied by a slight increase in overall prices. Price increases from April for hogs, broilers, oranges, and hay more than offset price decreases for lettuce, strawberries, cattle, and eggs.

Compared with May 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 4 points (3.9 percent) lower. Price decreases from May 1998 for soybeans, corn, hogs, and wheat more than offset price increases for peaches, carrots, cucumbers, and turkeys.

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June 1, 1999 Cherry Production Forecast

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 24, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana sweet cherry producers expect 1999 total production to be 1,300 tons, down 37 percent from 1998. Most growers attributed the decrease to late frosts in the spring and cool weather during pollination. This cool weather made it difficult for bees to effectively pollinate the trees. The frosts weren't hard enough to kill the trees the way they did in 1989, but will significantly affect this year's production.

U.S. sweet cherry production is forecast at 217,000 tons, up 3 percent from 1998 but 4 percent below 1997. California expects to produce a much larger crop while Oregon, Washington and Michigan expect declines.

The Washington crop, at 80,000 tons, is 17 percent less than last year and unchanged from the previous forecast. Production in Oregon is forecast at 53,000 tons, down 4 percent from last year and unchanged from the previous forecast. Winter weather conditions lasted longer than normal this growing season in the Northwest. Cool weather and heavy rain during the bloom period resulted in reduced pollination in many areas.

The sweet cherry crop in California is forecast at 50,000 tons, more than triple the 1998 crop and up 2 percent from 1997. Moderate rains over a large portion of the State and a good amount of chill hours contributed to the favorable growing conditions in California.

The Michigan sweet cherry crop is forecast at 29,000 tons, down 17 percent from 1998 but up 7 percent from 1997. Bud formation was reduced by drought conditions last fall. Some frost damage was also reported. Harvest will start around July 1.

Idaho, Montana, and Utah are forecasting smaller crops than a year ago due to frost damage and poor weather conditions during the spring. New York and Pennsylvania are expecting larger crops due to favorable weather conditions.

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June 1, 1999 Crop Production Forecast

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 11, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Curt Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

As of June 1, Montana winter wheat producers were expecting a yield of 40 bushels per acre, up 1 bushel from last year and unchanged from last month. If realized, total production would be 40.0 million bushels and 18 percent less than last year. Harvested acreage remains the same as last month at 1.0 million acres, down 250,000 acres from last year and the smallest harvested acreage since 1939. As of June 6, the winter wheat crop was rated 4 percent poor, 27 percent fair, 55 percent good and 14 percent excellent.

At the U.S. level, winter wheat production is forecast at 1.61 billion bushels, down fractionally from last month and down 14 percent from 1998. Based on conditions around June 1, the U.S. yield is forecast at 44.7 bushels per acre, up 0.3 bushels from the last forecast. Grain area totals 36.0 million acres, down 1 percent from May 1.

Hard Red is down 1 percent from a month ago to 981 million bushels. White Winter is down 2 percent from last month. Soft Red is up 2 percent from the last forecast and now totals 419 million bushels.

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Agricultural Prices Received for May

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 29, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of May were mostly lower than April prices. Montana winter wheat average price was $2.89 per bushel, down 3 cents from April's level; durum wheat was $2.85 per bushel, up 5 cents; and spring wheat was 7 cents lower at $3.05 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.47 and malt barley was $2.46 per bushel.

The mid-June price for alfalfa hay was $62.00 per ton, up $2.00 from last month. Other hay, at $52.00, was $4.00 per ton higher than May's price. The mid-month winter wheat price averaged $2.80 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.10; feed barley price was $1.50; and malt barley averaged $2.40.

Livestock prices for the full month of May were mixed. Steer and heifer prices decreased $1.10 to $71.30 per cwt. Cows were up 80 cents to $37.90 and the average price for calves decreased $3.50 to $81.20 per cwt. Sheep prices increased 60 cents to $28.40 per cwt. and lamb prices increased $9.00 to $78.20 per cwt. Milk prices were unchanged from last month at $12.60 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-June averaged $72.60 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for May and changes from April were as follows: winter wheat was $2.36, down 12 cents; spring wheat was $2.93, down 2 cents; the all barley price was $1.81, up 4 cents; and steer and heifer prices were $65.20, down 80 cents.

The U.S. mid-June winter wheat price was $2.37 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.01 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.48 per bushel, all barley was $1.78. Steer and heifer prices were $66.80 per cwt, cow prices were $36.10, all hog prices were $33.80 per cwt, and market egg prices were 55.3 cents per dozen.

The All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in June was 98 based on 1990-92=100, down 1 point (1.0 percent) from May. The decrease was mostly due to the seasonal change in the mix of commodities farmers sell. The normal decrease in marketings of oranges, tomatoes, strawberries, and cattle more than offset the relatively higher marketings of wheat, grapes, hay, and cantaloupes. The change in marketings was accompanied by a slight decrease in overall prices. Price decreases from May for cantaloupes, hogs, peaches, and hay more than offset price increases for oranges, milk, cattle, and celery.

Compared with June 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 4 points (3.9 percent) lower. Price decreases from June 1998 for hogs, corn, soybeans, and milk more than offset price increases for cattle, carrots, tomatoes, and turkeys.

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Montana's All Wheat Production Up 8 Percent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 12, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Curt Lund or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

Montana's **all wheat crop** is expected to be 8 percent larger than last year, but nearly the same size as the 1997 crop. As of July 1 producers expect to harvest 182.04 million bushels of all wheat, up from the 168.79 million harvested last season. The area for harvest is expected to be 5.41 million acres, 130,000 more than were harvested in 1998. Conditions have been generally favorable for wheat production so far this year. Many areas of the state have benefitted from timely moisture, however some communities remain dry as of July 1.

The forecast for **winter wheat** improved during June as producers now expect to average 42.0 bushels per acre, up two bushel from the June forecast. Generally favorable June weather conditions improved prospects for the crop. Production is forecast to be 40.74 million bushels, up only slightly from the June forecast because of a reduction in harvested acres now estimated at 970,000 acres. The July forecast for winter wheat is the smallest crop since 1988.

The first **spring wheat** production forecast is 129.6 million bushels, 20 percent larger than produced in 1998. The harvested acres are expected to be 4.05 million, 13 percent larger than last year. The expected yield of 32.0 bushels compares with 30.0 averaged last year. If this forecast is realized, 1999 production would be the second largest crop, exceeded only by the record 1995 spring wheat production. Montana's spring crop is in good to excellent condition, but lags average development. **Durum wheat** is forecast to be 11.7 million bushels, 3 percent smaller than the 1998 crop. The acreage for harvest, at 390,000, is 9 percent smaller than harvested last year. The expected yield is 30.0 bushels, 2 bushels better than last year.

Barley yields are estimated to average 53.0 bushels per acre in 1999, 5 bushels better than last year's Montana average. Barley production is forecast to be 60.95 million bushels compared with 57.60 million produced last year. Growers expect to harvest 1.15 million acres, 50,000 fewer than harvested in 1998. **Oats** producers expect to harvest 4.8 million bushels of grain, nearly 50 percent more than produced last year. The 1999 area for harvest is expected to be 80,000 acres compared with 60,000 harvested for grain in 1998. The expected yield of 60.0 bushels is 6 bushels above last year's average.

Montana **potato** producers planted 11,000 acres in 1999, an increase of 400 acres from last year and the largest acreage planted since 1950. The first forecast of potato production will be on November 10, 1999.

Nationally, **winter wheat** acres for harvest are forecast at 35.6 million, down 11 percent from 1998. Harvest progress in the 19 major producing states had reached 45 percent completion by July 4. This trailed well behind last year's rapid harvest and lagged normal by eight points. Forecasted head counts from the Objective Yield surveys in the six HRW states (Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas) are up slightly from last month, and weight per head is up a collective 15 percent and is near last year's record. **Other spring wheat** harvested area is forecast at 15.0 million acres, down 1 percent from last year. Minnesota's crop is in mostly fair-to-good condition while the Dakota's spring wheat crops are rated as mostly good. Scab has been reported in eastern North Dakota districts. **Durum wheat** area for 1999 grain harvest is expected to total 4.05 million acres, up 9 percent from last year. Modest yield increases are expected in Minnesota and South Dakota Durum. North Dakota's late planted crop trails average development by several days.

Barley production for 1999 is forecast at 295 million bushels, down16 percent from a year ago and down 18 percent from 1997. The first forecast for 1999 indicates that producers expect yields to average 60.3 bushels per acre, a slight increase from last year. Area harvested and to be harvested, at 4.89 million acres, is 17 percent below the 5.87 million acres harvested the previous year.

Oats production is estimated at 161.3 million bushels, 4 percent below last year's 167.1 million bushels. If realized, production would be the third lowest on record. The estimated yield is 61.1 bushels per acre, up 0.7 bushel from 1998. This would be the third highest yield on record. Area for harvest was unchanged from the previous estimate of 2.64 million acres.

Area planted to **fall potatoes** in 1999 is estimated at 1.22 million acres, down 2 percent from last year but 1 percent above 1997. Harvest is expected from 1.20 million acres, down 2 percent from a year ago but 1 percent above two years ago. Planting and early development has been slow in much of the western and north-central States.

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July U.S. All Sheep and Lamb Inventory Totals 9.00 Million Head

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 16, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

All sheep and lamb inventory in the United States on July 1, 1999, totaled 9.00 million head, 4 percent below July 1, 1998. Breeding sheep inventory declined to 5.35 million head on July 1, 1999, 4 percent below July 1998. Market sheep and lambs (including newborn lambs), at 3.65 million head, were 5 percent below last July. Of the July 1, 1999 breeding herd, 4.38 million head were ewes one year old and older, 215,000 head were rams one year old and older, and 755,000 head were replacement lambs.

Market sheep and lambs, at 3.575 million head, were 4 percent below last July. Of the total market lambs, 59.3 percent were under 65 pounds, 20.4 percent were 65 to 84 pounds, 13.0 percent were 85 to 105 pounds, and the remainder, 7.3 percent, were over 105 pounds on July 1.

The 1999 Lamb Crop in the United States is expected to total 4.75 million head, down 2 percent from the 1998 lamb crop of 4.87 million head. Lambs born during January through June 1999 totaled 4.21 million head or 89 percent of the yearly total. An additional 540,000 head are expected to be born during the period July through December 1999.

The July 1 sheep and lamb numbers are published by regions. Montana is included with Colorado, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. The total number of sheep and lambs in the region was 3.0 million head, down 3 percent from a year ago. This region accounted for 33.9 percent of the total U.S. sheep and lambs.

The region's breeding sheep and lambs inventory was 1.7 million head, down 3 percent from last year. Of the total breeding sheep and lambs, 1.4 million head were ewes one year and older, 50,000 head were rams one year and older, and 230,000 head were replacement lambs.

All market sheep and lambs for the region totaled 1.4 million head, down 3 percent from a year ago. Of the total market lambs, 71.5 percent were under 65 pounds, 12.8 percent were 65 to 84 pounds, 7.7 percent were 85 to 105 pounds, and the remaining 8.0 percent were over 105 pounds.

Lambs born during January and June 1999 in the region reached 1.5 million head. An additional 20,000 are expected to be born during the period July through December 1999.

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United States July 1 Cattle Inventory Down 1 Percent

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 16, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Bo Turnbow or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

All cattle and calves in the United States as of July 1, 1999, totaled 106.8 million head, 1 percent below the 107.7 million on July 1, 1998 and 2 percent below the 109.2 million two years ago.

All cows and heifers that have calved, at 43.2 million, were 1 percent below the 43.6 million on July 1, 1998 and 2 percent below the 44.1 million two years ago. Beef cows, at 34.1 million, were down 1 percent from July 1, 1998 and 2 percent below two years ago. Milk cows, at 9.15 million, were down 1 percent from July 1, 1998 and 2 percent below two years ago.

Other class estimates on July 1, 1999, and the changes from July 1 last year and two years ago, respectively, are as follows:

- All heifers 500 pounds and over, 16.6 million, down 1 percent and down 3 percent.
- Beef replacement heifers, 4.8 million, down 4 percent and down 9 percent.
- Milk replacement heifers, 3.7 million, up 3 percent and up 3 percent.
- Other heifers, 8.1 million, no change and down 1 percent.
- Steers weighing 500 pounds and over, 14.4 million, down 1 percent and down 3 percent.
- Bulls weighing 500 pounds and over, 2.1 million, down 5 percent and down 9 percent.
- Calves under 500 pounds, 30.5 million, down slightly and down 1 percent.
- All cattle and calves on feed for slaughter, 11.4 million, up 4 percent and up 5 percent.

The 1999 calf crop is expected to be 38.3 million, down 1 percent from 1998 and down 2 percent from 1997. This would be the smallest calf crop since 1952. Calves born during the first half of the year are estimated at 28.2 million, down 1 percent from 1998 and 1997.

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Montana and U.S. Farms with Internet Access More Than Doubles

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 30, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Thomas Chard at 1-800-835-2612.

A total of 38 percent of Montana farms and ranches now have Internet access, compared with 15 percent with Internet access in 1997, according to the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. A total of 65 percent of farms and ranches had access to a computer in 1999, compared with 54 percent two years ago. Fifty-two percent of all Montana farms and ranches own or lease a computer, up from 41 percent in 1997. Farms and ranches using computers for their agricultural business increased from 33 percent in 1997 to 36 percent in 1999.

Farm computer usage numbers are also published by regions. Montana is included with Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. In 1999, 64 percent of the farms and ranches in this region have access to a computer, 55 percent own or lease a computer; 37 percent are using a computer for their agricultural business; and 41 percent have Internet access. Computer access for crop farms in the region increased 2 percent to 62 percent. The percentage of crop farms having Internet access almost doubled to 44 percent. The percentage of livestock producers in the region that had access to computers increased to 66 percent, compared with 47 percent two years ago. Thirty seven percent of the livestock producers in the region have Internet access, compared with 16 percent in 1997.

A total of 29 percent of U.S. farms and ranches now have Internet access, compared with 13 percent with Internet access in 1997. A total of 47 percent of farms and ranches had access to a computer in 1999, compared with 38 percent two years ago. Forty percent of all U.S. farms and ranches own or lease a computer, up from 31 percent in 1997. Farms and ranches using computers for their agricultural business increased from 20 percent in 1997 to 24 percent in 1999.

In 1999, 77 percent of U.S. farms and ranches with sales of $250,000 or more have access to a computer; 72 percent own or lease a computer; 65 percent are using a computer for their agricultural business; and 52 percent have Internet access. For farms and ranches with sales of $249,999 or less; 45 percent have access to a computer; 37 percent own or lease a computer; 21 percent use a computer for their agricultural business; and 27 percent have Internet access.

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Agricultural Prices Received for June

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 30, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Thomas Chard or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of June were mixed compared with May prices, according to Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. Montana winter wheat average price was $2.81 per bushel, down 8 cents from May's level; durum wheat was $3.00 per bushel, up 15 cents; and spring wheat was 10 cents higher at $3.15 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.54 and malt barley was $2.20 per bushel.

The mid-July price for alfalfa hay was $64.00 per ton, up $2.00 from last month. Other hay, at $55.00 per ton, was $3.00 higher than June's price. The mid-July winter wheat price averaged $2.70 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.10; feed barley price was $1.45; and malt barley averaged $2.30.

Livestock prices for the full month of June were mostly higher. Steer and heifer prices increased $3.90 to $75.20 per cwt. Cows were up 80 cents to $38.70 and the average price for calves increased $2.70 to $83.90 per cwt. Sheep prices increased $6.10 to $34.50 per cwt. and lamb prices increased $1.90 to $80.10 per cwt. Milk prices were up 10 cents from last month at $12.70 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-July averaged $72.90 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for June and changes from May were as follows: winter wheat was $2.32, down 4 cents; spring wheat was $3.01, up 8 cents; the all barley price was $1.70, down 11 cents; and steer and heifer prices were $66.70, up $1.50.

The U.S. mid-July winter wheat price was $2.07 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.93 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.15 per bushel, all barley was $1.73. Steer and heifer prices were $64.60 per cwt, cow prices were $38.20, all hog prices were $31.20 per cwt, and all egg prices were $0.57 cents per dozen.

The All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in July was 94 based on 1990-92=100, down 4 points (4.1 percent) from June. Price decreases from June for cattle, wheat, hogs, and corn more than offset price increases for milk, potatoes, oranges, and asparagus. The seasonal changes in the mix of commodities farmers sell also affect the overall index. Lower seasonal marketings of milk, cantaloupes,potatoes, and oranges more than offset the relatively higher marketings of wheat, tomatoes, grapes, and grain sorghum.

Compared with July 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 8 points (7.8 percent) lower. Price decreases from July 1998 for wheat, corn, soybeans, and broilers more than offset price increases for cattle, turkeys, potatoes, and oranges.

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September Ag Survey to Measure Grain Yield, Production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 23, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Bo Turnbow or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

What are the differences in yields for irrigated, non-irrigated, summer fallow, and recropped small grain crops in Montana? To gather reliable and accurate information about the 1999 grain harvest, the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture will be surveying producers for the September Agricultural Survey.

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service will be conducting the survey between August 30 and September 14, 1999. Survey questions include the number of acres of small grains harvested and the yield or production for the 1999 crop. Approximately 1,500 Montana producers will be contacted during the survey.

The information gathered is widely used. Producers rely on the data to reach valid production, marketing, and investment decisions. Industry analysts, extension agents, and farm organizations use the information in a variety of ways that benefit farmers.

"We safeguard the confidentiality of all survey responses," said Peggy Stringer, Montana State Statistician. "Information from individual operations is combined with other responses to provide the needed data." MASS works with farmers and ranchers to provide meaningful, accurate, and objective statistics that help keep U.S. agriculture informed.

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September 1, 1999 Grain Stocks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 30, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

All wheat stocks in Montana on September 1 ,1999 totaled 192.85 million bushels, down 4 percent from the same quarter last year. Stocks stored on the farm accounted for 165.0 million bushels and off farm stocks accounted for 27.85 million bushels. All **spring wheat** stocks, at 145.0 million bushels, were up 8 percent from last year and accounted for 75 percent of the total wheat stocks. **Winter wheat** stocks were estimated at 47.85 million bushels, down 29 percent from last year. **Durum wheat** stocks were estimated at 17.86 million bushels, up 7.11 million bushels a 66% increase from last year. All wheat disappearance for the March-May quarter was 33.53 million bushels, compared with 34.09 million for the same quarter last year. **Barley** stocks in all positions on September 1, 1999 were up 10 percent from last year and were set at 56.0 million bushels. **Oat** stocks were down 3 percent from a year ago and were estimated at 3.08 million bushels.

Nationally, all wheat stored in all positions September 1, 1999 totaled 2.46 billion bushels, up 3 percent from a year ago and the highest September 1 level since the 1987-88 marketing year. On farm stocks are 903 million bushels, up 2 percent from last year. More than 20 percent of the stocks on farms were standing in fields at the time of data collection; North Dakota and Montana had the majority of the unharvested production. Off-farm stocks, at 1.56 billion bushels, are up 4 percent. Wheat disappearance for the first quarter of the marketing year is 825 million bushels, down 10 percent from the same period in 1998.

U.S. **durum wheat** stored in all positions September 1, 1999 totaled 147 million bushels, up 17 percent from a year ago to the highest September 1 level since 1986. Farm stocks are 107 million bushels, up 22 percent from last year. More than 60 percent of the stocks on farms were standing in fields at the time of data collection, mostly in North Dakota. Off-farm stocks, at 39.9 million bushels, are up 5 percent from last September. Durum disappearance for the first quarter of the marketing year is 24.5 million bushels, down 5 percent from the same period in 1998.

U.S. **barley** stocks in all positions on September 1, 1999 are estimated at 297 million bushels, 9 percent below last year. Of the total barley stocks on hand, 167 million bushels are stored on farms, 14 percent below a year ago. Off-farm stocks, at 130 million bushels, are only 2 percent below 1998. Indicated disappearance during the June - August 1999 quarter totaled 135 million bushels, 11 percent lower than the same period a year earlier.

U.S. **oats** stored in all positions on September 1, 1999 totaled 148 million bushels, 8 percent below the stocks on September 1, 1999. Of the total stocks on hand, 97.5 million bushels were stored on farms, 12 percent below this time last year. Off-farm stocks totaled 51.0 million bushels, 1 percent below a year earlier. Indicated disappearance during June - August 1999 totaled 102 million bushels, 24 percent more than the same period a year ago.

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1998 Pest Management Practices

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 7, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

The pest management practices in this report are based on data compiled from a survey conducted in the Fall of 1998 by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. All results refer to responses from sampled producers concerning specific practices. Results are published by regions. Montana is in the West Region along with Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Pest management practices for major crops in our region are listed below.

All Wheat: The leading pest management practice used on wheat in the United States was rotating crops to control pests, which was used on 58 percent of the acres and by 53 percent of the farms. In the West Region, the leading practice used was scouting for pests. This was done on 56 percent of the acres and by 42 percent of the farms. Cleaning implements after fieldwork was the second most widely used practice at both the national and regional level. Forty nine percent of the U.S. wheat acres and 33 percent of the U.S. farms used this practice, compared to, 55 percent of the West wheat acres and 42 percent of the West farms using this practice in 1998.

Barley: The leading pest management practice in the United States for barley was rotating crops to control pests. Sixty-three percent of the farms used this practice on 71 percent of the acres across the United States. This was also the leading pest management practice in the West Region, with 52 percent of the farms using this practice on 62 percent of the acres. The following pest management practices were used on over 40 percent of the U.S. barley acres, as well as, barley acres in the West region: using tillage practices to manage pests, cleaning implements after fieldwork, rotating crops to control pest, scouting, and alternating the use of pesticides.

Alfalfa: Rotating crops to control pests was the most widely used pest management practice on the U.S. alfalfa acreage, at 33 percent. Scouting for pests and using tillage to control pests were used on 26 percent and 23 percent of the U.S. acres, respectively. At the regional level, using tillage to manage pests was the most widely used practice, at 33 percent. Scouting for pest was the next common practice, at 30 percent of the regional alfalfa acres.

Other Hay: Twelve percent of the U.S. producers of hay other than alfalfa utilized tillage practices to manage pests, compared to 25 percent of regional producers. Scouting for pests was used by 6 percent of the U.S. producers and by 16 percent of the West Region producers.

Pest management practices for other selected crops are also available from our office and are contained in the national press release located on the Internet at www.usda.gov/nass/pubs/rptscal.htm.

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Spring Wheat Forecast Down from Last Month

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 9, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Curt Lund at 1-800-835-2612

Montana's September 1, 1999 other spring wheat production forecast is 109.35 million bushels, down 4 percent from last month. If realized, this would be 1 percent higher than last year because of an increase in harvested acres. The average yield, at 27 bushels per acre, was down 1 bushel from the August 1, 1999 forecast and is 3 bushels per acre lower than last year. Harvested acres are unchanged from last month and are forecast at 4.05 million acres. Harvest progress is behind last year and the 5-year average. As of September 5, 1999, spring wheat is 69 percent harvested compared with 94 percent last year and 77 percent for the average.

Durum wheat production as of September 1, 1999 is unchanged from last month's forecast of 10.92 million bushels, down 9 percent from last year. Yields are expected to average 28 bushels per acre which is the same as last month and last year. Harvested acreage remained unchanged from last month at 390,000 acres compared with 430,000 acres in 1998.

Even though winter wheat production is not forecast on September 1, if we added the August winter wheat production forecast with current spring wheat and durum forecasts the total wheat crop would be estimated at 158.10 million bushels, down 6 percent from 1998.

The September 1, 1999 forecast for barley remains unchanged from last month and is set at 52.90 million bushels, down 8 percent from last year. Yields are forecast at 46 bushels per acre compared with 48 bushels per acre for1998. Harvested acreage is unchanged from August and is forecast at 1.15 million acres which is 50,000 acres lower than 1998.

Sugar beet yield is down 0.5 tons per acre from last month, at 23.5 tons per acre, but harvested acreage remains unchanged at 61,800 acres. Total production is forecast at 1.45 million tons, up 3 percent from last year.

At the U.S. level all wheat production for September 1, 1999 is placed at 2.31 billion bushels, down less than 1 percent from the August forecast and down 10 percent from 1998. The U.S. yield is forecast at 42.3 bushels per acre. This is down 0.3 bushels from last month. Other spring wheat production is forecast at 508 million bushels, down 1 percent from last month and down 4 percent from last season. The final forecast of U.S. average yield is 33.9 bushels per acre, 0.3 bushels per acre lower than a month ago. Hard red spring production is down 1 percent from August to 455 million bushels because yields declined in Montana and South Dakota. Heat was the factor in both states. The South Dakota harvest is finished. Better Idaho yields have white spring production up 1 percent to 52.5 million bushels.

U.S. durum wheat production for September 1, 1999 is forecast at 110 million bushels, down 3 percent from last month and 22 percent less than 1998. The U.S. yield is now forecast at 28.3 bushels per acre, down 0.9 bushels from August 1. North Dakota's crop is maturing slowly; only 19 percent was combined as of August 29.

U.S. barley production for 1999 is forecast at 283 million bushels, less than 1 percent higher than the August forecast but 20 percent below the 1998 production. Area harvested and to be harvested is unchanged from August, at 4.83 million acres, down 18 percent from the previous year. Yields are expected to average 58.5 bushels per acre, up 0.3 bushels from last month but 1.6 bushels below last year's yield.

Sugar beet production is forecast at record high 33.6 million tons, 3 percent above the previous record in 1998. Growers in the 12 sugar beet producing states expect to harvest 1,525,500 acres, 5 percent more than last year and the highest since 1,540,500 acres were harvested in 1969. The yield is forecast at 22.0 tons per acre, 0.5 ton below 1998.

Corn production is forecast at 9.38 billion bushels, down 2 percent from the last forecast and down 4 percent from 1998. Based on September 1, 1999 conditions, yields are expected to average 132.2 bushels per acre, down 2.5 bushels per acre from August and 2.2 bushels from a year ago. If realized, this would be the fourth largest production and third highest yield on record. Acreage for grain harvest is estimated at 71.0 million acres, unchanged from August.

NASS PROGRAM CHANGES: The National Agricultural Statistics Service has completed a preliminary review of it's statistical program to make sure it best meets the needs of data users in the future. These changes are documented at the following web site: http://www.usda.gov/nass/events/events.htm

This site can be reached through the NASS home page by clicking on "Coming Events and News" under AGENCY INFORMATION. The proposed program changes are the first subject.

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Agricultural Prices Received for August

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 29, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of August 1999 were mostly lower compared with July 1999 prices, according to Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. Montana winter wheat average price was $2.60 per bushel, down 9 cents from July's level; durum wheat was $2.92 per bushel, down 6 cents; and spring wheat was 23 cents lower at $2.90 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.38 and malt barley was $2.96 per bushel.

The mid-September price for alfalfa hay was $68.00 per ton, up $5.00 from last month. Other hay, at $58.00 per ton, was also $5.00 higher than August's price. The mid-September winter wheat price averaged $2.70 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.90; feed barley price was $1.40; and malt barley averaged $2.90.

Livestock prices for the full month of August were mixed. Steer and heifer prices increased 20 cents to $74.00 per cwt. Cows were down 80 cents to $38.90 and the average price for calves increased $1.60 to $88.10 per cwt. Sheep prices decreased $4.30 to $28.60 per cwt. and lamb prices increased $1.50 to $79.60 per cwt. Milk prices were up 60 cents from last month at $13.40 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-September averaged $74.70 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for August and changes from July were as follows: winter wheat was $2.34 up 21 cents; spring wheat was $2.85, down 8 cents; the all barley price was $2.37, up 33 cents, again last month there was an increase in malt barley sales as a percent of the total barley sold; and steer and heifer prices were $66.20, up $1.00.

The U.S. mid-September winter wheat price was $2.41 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.82 per bushel, all wheat price was $2.56 per bushel, all barley was $2.14. Steer and heifer prices were $66.90 per cwt, cow prices were $34.90, all hog prices were $32.30 per cwt, and all egg prices were 56.7 cents per dozen.

The preliminary All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in September was 97 based on 1990-92=100, down 1 point (1.0 percent) from the August index. The seasonal changes in the mix of commodities farmers sell affect the overall index. Lower seasonal marketings of cattle, broilers, wheat, and grapes more than offset the relatively higher marketings of soybeans, peanuts, corn, and potatoes. The marketing changes would have decreased the index two points but were partially offset by the price increases. Price increases from August for milk, lettuce, tomatoes, and soybeans more than offset price decreases for hogs, grapes, potatoes, and onions.

Compared with September 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 2 points (2.0 percent) lower. Price decreases from September 1998 for broilers, soybeans, milk, and cotton more than offset price increases for cattle, hogs, calves, and wheat.

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October Sweet Cherry Production and Disposition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 5, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service will be conducting a Sweet Cherry Production and Disposition Survey during the last three weeks of October and all of November. Producers in the sample will be sent a questionnaire on or about October 8. Growers who don't respond by mail will be called by a telephone interviewer on or about the 8th of November. This survey is important to help set production estimates for the current year's sweet cherry crop and help determine how the crop was utilized. The survey will also contain price questions to help determine not only the overall price of this year's crop, but the price of different types of fresh market sales and sales for commercial processing.

Questions asked will be in regards to the 1999 production. All information supplied during the interview is kept confidential by law. Summarized results will be released to the public in the Noncitrus Fruits and Nuts Report, which is released on or about the 21st of January, 2000.

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Potato Acreage and Production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 5, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service will be conducting the annual Potato Acreage and Production Survey during the last two weeks of October through the end of November. Producers in the sample will be sent a questionnaire the on or about October 15th. Growers who don't respond by mail will be called by a telephone interviewer anytime from November 8th to the end of November. This survey is important to help determine the total planted and harvested acres to this year's crop along with total production attained.

All questions asked will be in regards to the 1999 crop. All information supplied during the interview is kept confidential by law. Summarized results will be released to the public in the Annual Crop Production Report, which is released on or about January 12, 2000.

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October Labor Survey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 5, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi at 1-800-835-2612

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service will be collecting data for the Quarterly Agricultural Labor Survey beginning Monday, October 18 and continue to the end of October. Estimates of farm employment are used for a variety of purposes by State and Federal governments, educational institutions, farmer organizations, and private sector employers of agricultural labor. There are numerous examples of how farm employment estimates are used, but the following are just a few:

- USDA uses farm worker data to analyze changes in farm policy and to formulate farm productivity indexes. The inclusion of wage rate data in the Parity Index (Index on Prices Paid by Farmers) is required by law.
- Farm worker data are an important component of personal and national income for the agricultural sector of the Gross Domestic Product.
- Federal regulations that determine the minimum wage rates for domestic and foreign agricultural workers in the U.S. also use the Agricultural Labor Survey data as a major input into the calculations.

Information will be collected based on the reference week running from Sunday, October 10 through Saturday, October 16. Questions asked will be in regards to the total number of unpaid, paid, and contract or custom workers; the total number of hours worked for each; and the total gross wages given to paid and contract or custom workers. Only 113 operations in Montana will be included in this important survey, so every response is critical.

Montana operations selected to participate in this October's Labor Survey will be notified by letter and phone interviewers will contact them starting on October 18th to complete this survey. All information supplied during the interview is kept confidential by law. In mid-November, Regional and National farm labor estimates will be released to the public.

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1999 Sugar Beet and Hay Production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 8, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Steve Sakry at 1-800-835-2612

Montana sugar beet production for October 1999 is forecast at 1.45 million tons, unchanged from last month's forecast but up 3 percent from last year. Forecasted yield, at 23.5 tons per acre, is unchanged from last month but is 0.9 tons per acre higher than 1998. Harvested acreage remains unchanged from last month at 61,800 acres but this is 600 acres less than last year. Sugar beets are 22 percent harvested as of October 3. This is 8 percentage points higher than last year and 6 percentage points higher than the five-year average.

U.S. sugar beet production is forecast at a record high 34.0 million tons, 4 percent above the previous record in 1998. Growers in the 12 sugar beet-producing states expect to harvest 1,525,400 acres, 5 percent more than last year and the highest since 1,540,500 acres were harvested in 1969. The yield is forecast at 22.3 tons per acre, slightly below the 1998 yield of 22.5 tons.

Forecasted alfalfa hay yield for Montana was increased from the August forecast by 0.1 ton per acre to 2.3 tons per acre. If realized this would be 0.1 ton higher than last year. Total production of alfalfa hay is estimated at 4.03 million tons, up nearly 8 percent from last year. Harvested acreage is estimated at 1.75 million acres, up 50,000 acres from last year. Other hay yields remain unchanged from August at 1.5 tons per acre but down 0.1 ton from 1998. Total production is set a 1.35 million tons, up 5 percent from last year. Harvested acreage is unchanged from August at 900,000 acres, up 100,000 acres from last year. All hay production is estimated at 5.38 million tons, up 7 percent from last year.

Nationally, all hay production is forecast at a record high 161 million tons, up slightly from the August forecast but 7 percent higher than 1998. The all hay yield is forecast at a record high 2.60 tons per acre, up 0.08 tons per acre from last year. Area harvested and to be harvested for all hay is unchanged from August, at 62.1 million acres, but up 3 percent from the previous year.

U.S. production of alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures is forecast at 85.5 million tons, 4 percent above 1998 and 9 percent above 1997. Yields are expected to average a record high 3.57 tons per acre, up 0.10 tons from both last year and August. Area harvested and to be harvested is unchanged from August, at 24.0 million acres, up 1 percent from 1998.

U.S. all other hay production is forecast at a record high 75.9 million tons, up 9 percent from 1998 and 3 percent above 1997. Yields are expected to average 1.99 tons per acre, down 0.05 tons from August but up 0.08 tons from last year. Area harvested and to be harvested is unchanged from August at 38.1 million acres, 5 percent above last year's total.

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NEWS

Re-interview Necessary to Assess Late Harvested Acres

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Bo Turnbow or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

On September 30 the National Agricultural Statistics Service released the Small Grains Summary and the Grain Stocks report. At that time a significant amount of barley, durum and spring wheat acres in Montana had not been harvested. **Montana Agricultural Statistics Service (MASS),** the **only official source of agricultural estimates** for Montana producers, will re-interview producers who had not completed their small grains harvest at the time of the September Survey. The purpose of the re-interview is to be sure farmers actually harvested their small grain acreage and to correctly assess the harvested acres and yield. Producers will be asked questions on small grains acres harvested and yield.

The results of the re-interview will be released in the Crop Report on November10.

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NEWS

Maltsters and Brewers Purchased 17.9 Million Bushels of the 1998 Barley Crop

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 22, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry at 1-800-835-2612.

Maltsters and brewers purchased 17.9 million bushels of Montana's 1998 barley crop to make malt, down nearly 25 percent from 1997 and down 4 percent from the 1996 crop year, according to a recent survey conducted by the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. The survey was requested and funded by the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee. The average protein of the 1998 malting crop was 12.6 percent, compared with 12.4 percent for the 1997 crop.

Montana growers planted 1.35 million acres of barley in 1998, up 100,000 acres from 1997. Of the total, about 690 thousand acres were planted to malting type varieties. If the yield of malting varieties equaled the state average yield per planted acre for all barley then approximately 33.0 million bushels of malting type would be produced. Since only 17.9 million bushels were used for malt the remaining 15.1 did not make the malting grade or exceeded demand for malting barley. The malt barley utilized represented over 31 percent of the 1998 total barley crop compared with 39 percent in 1997 and 38 percent in 1996.

Harrington was the variety most frequently purchased by Maltsters and brewers and represented 63 percent of the total purchases. Anheuser Bush varieties were the second most commonly purchased. Sixty-six percent of all malt barley purchased was grown in North Central Montana. Central Montana growers produced 19 percent of the total.

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County Estimates for Rotational Crops Will Be Published

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 27, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry at 1-800-835-2612.

To gather reliable and accurate information for 1999 county level estimates, the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture will be surveying Montana producers for the acreage and production of crops grown.

At growers' request and with additional funding from the Montana Department of Agriculture this year, Montana Agricultural Statistics Service will be providing county estimates for many rotational crops including chickpeas, lentils, dry edible beans, and oilseed crops. "County level information for rotational crops like chickpeas, lentils, dry edible beans, and oilseed crops has not been available and Montana producers came to us requesting more county level data. We will be able to provide this information," said Peggy Stringer, Montana State Statistician. "But, we need producers to provide survey information when contacted by an interviewer or mailed a questionnaire." Montana Agricultural Statistics Service has a long history of preparing county estimates for a wide range of commodities. They will continue to provide county estimates for wheat, barley, hay and other major crops in Montana.

There are many uses for county estimates and as farm programs are created the need for accurate county estimates have become even more important. Agencies like Risk Management use the county estimates' data to provide a safety net for producers through insurance coverage for crops.

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service will be conducting the survey between October 19 and November 24, 1999 with an additional week in mid-December. Survey questions include the number of acres of all crops harvested and the yield or production for the 1999. Acreage, yield and production for commodities will be published by County starting in February 2000.

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Agricultural Prices Received for September

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 29, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Curt Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of September 1999 were mostly higher compared with August 1999 prices, according to Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. Montana winter wheat average price was $2.74 per bushel, up 14 cents from August's level; durum wheat was $2.92 per bushel, unchanged; and spring wheat was 14 cents higher at $3.04 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.43 and malt barley was $2.53 per bushel.

The mid-October price for alfalfa hay was $67.00 per ton, down $1.00 from last month. Other hay, at $55.00 per ton, was $3.00 lower than September's price. The mid-October winter wheat price averaged $2.70 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.95, feed barley was $1.50, and malt barley averaged $2.60.

Livestock prices for the full month of September were mixed. Steer and heifer prices increased 80 cents to $74.80 per cwt. Cows were down $2.10 to $36.80 and the average price for calves increased $2.30 to $90.40 per cwt. Sheep prices decreased 40 cents to $28.20 per cwt and lamb prices decreased $5.70 to $73.90 per cwt. Milk prices were up $1.60 cents from last month at $15.00 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-October averaged $81.20 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for September and changes from August were as follows: winter wheat was $2.46, up 12 cents; spring wheat was $2.86, up 1 cent; the all barley price was $2.03, down 34 cents; and steer and heifer prices were $67.10, up 90 cents.

The U.S. mid-October winter wheat price was $2.33 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.78 per bushel, all wheat was $2.49 per bushel, and all barley was $2.00. Steer and heifer prices were $70.10 per cwt, cow prices were $34.50, all hog prices were $34.10 per cwt, and all egg prices were 50.1 cents per dozen.

The preliminary All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in October was 92 based on 1990-92=100, down 5 points (5.2 percent) from the September index. The seasonal change in the mix of commodities farmers sell affects the overall index. Lower seasonal marketings of milk, wheat, tobacco, and grapes more than offset the relatively higher marketings of soybeans, corn, cotton lint and cottonseed. These marketing changes decreased the index four points. Price decreases from September account for one point of the decline. Lower prices for broilers, corn, milk, and eggs more than offset price increases for cattle, tobacco, oranges, and cucumbers.

Compared with October 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 7 points (7.1 percent) lower. Price decreases from October 1998 for soybeans, broilers, milk, and corn more than offset price increases for cattle, calves, hogs, and oranges.

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USDA's Montana Agricultural Statistics Service to Issue Special Small Grain Production Forecasts and Grain Stocks Report in November Crop Report

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November1, 1999

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612.

HELENA, November 1, 1999 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Montana Agricultural Statistics Service (MASS) announced today that two major changes will be made to the content of the *November Crop Production* Report issued at 8:30 AM on November 10, 1999.

The small grain production forecasts and Grain Stocks on hand will be updated for Montana, North Dakota, and the U.S. due to the extremely late harvest season.

Dry Pea and Lentil acreage, yield, and production data will be included in this report. Normally these data are included in the *October Crop Production* Report. The change was made at the request of the industry.

The *November Crop Production* Report will be available free of charge on the Internet from the NASS Home Page at: http://www.usda.gov/nass/, e-mail by sending a request to nass-mt@nass.usda.gov, or call the office at 406-441-1240.

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Irrigation Equipment and Facilities Now a $1 Billion Industry

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 9, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

America's farmers used more water to irrigate their crops in 1998 than in 1994, and spent over a billion dollars on irrigation equipment, facilities, and land improvements that same year–a 25 percent increase from 1994–according to a new report issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The *1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey* provides a snapshot of irrigation practices in the agricultural industry during 1998, and shows interesting trends since the last survey conducted in 1994. Although previous surveys provided data for 18 water resource areas and 27 States, the 1998 results offer data for every State and 20 water resource areas. This new irrigation survey also includes first-time statistics on expenditures for computers for irrigation, water management and water distribution software.

The survey confirmed that corn continues to be the dominant irrigated crop, accounting for nearly one-fourth of irrigated land. Other top irrigated crops following corn were alfalfa hay, cotton, soybeans, and orchard land. Together, the five top crops accounted for 57 percent of all irrigated land. The value of irrigated crops as a percent of all crops rose dramatically over the past 15 years according to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, the basis for the 1998 irrigation survey. During that same time period, irrigated cropland acreage remained steady, indicating the positive effect of irrigation to increase productivity.

Initially, it may appear that the reported rise from 1.7 to 1.8 acre-feet of water applied per acre indicates a decline in irrigation efficiency from 1994 to 1998. However, most of this dramatic increase may be attributed to heavy snowfalls in the West during 1997, causing increased streamflow and subsequent use of this plentiful, "free" water through gravity irrigation. When the amount of water used for gravity irrigation in California, Arizona, and Nevada–the three states effected by the 1997 deluge of snow and which account for nearly 20 percent of the total irrigated acres in the Nation–is extracted from the United States total, a continued trend toward efficiency and less water use emerges.

Demonstrating their continued support of efficiency, farmers continued to favor more precise water distribution methods. Sprinkler use showed a 7 percent increase from 1994 to 1998. Drip/trickle acreage rose 20 percent, although it is only used on 4 percent of irrigated land. Conversely, the percentage of acres irrigated by gravity-flow continued a decline apparent since the second Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey was conducted in 1984. Over half of the 50 million acres irrigated in 1998 were reported to have had improvements made to reduce energy use or conserve water. These improvements resulted in reduced water requirements on 19.2 million irrigated acres and decreased energy costs on 16.7 million irrigated acres.

The major irrigation source of water is wells, which account for 45 percent of all irrigation water and is used on 60 percent of irrigated land. Over 60 percent of farms using wells in 1998 used one or two wells. There is a notable difference in the average amount of water applied per acre depending on the source. Land irrigated with water from wells averaged only 1.4 acre-feet applied per acre, while land irrigated with water from off-farm water suppliers averaged 2.6 acre-feet.

Although energy continues to be a top expense, average energy costs fell from $33.68 per irrigated acre in 1994 to $31.92 in 1998. Of the 49,000 farms that spent $643 million on irrigation machinery and equipment purchases in 1998, about three-quarters of the farms used the expenditure for equipment replacement, a fifth on expansion, and less than 5 percent on water conservation equipment.

The 1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey results are used by equipment manufacturers, dealers, extension agents, government agencies, farmer associations, water and utility companies, and others to benchmark current practices, determine the most effective measures to ensure efficient irrigation, and predict the pathway of the future. To discover the wealth of irrigation and other agricultural data available from NASS resources, including hundreds of commodity production and price reports, or to review a full catalog of NASS products/services, visit the NASS Home Page at www.usda.gov/nass/. The 1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey, 1997 Census of Agriculture reports, State and County Profiles, Highlights, and a slide show presenting *Quick Facts* are accessible by clicking "Census of Agriculture." For other information, e-mail a request to nass-mt@nass.usda.gov or call 1-800-835-2612.

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Revised Small Grains Estimate from Producer Reinterviews

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 10, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Curt Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

Montana and North Dakota producers with unharvested small grains during the September Agricultural Survey were reinterviewed to update the harvested acreage and yield. Montana's **durum wheat** yield was reduced by 1 bushel per acre from September and is now estimated at 27 bushels per acre. Durum wheat production, at 10.53 million bushels, is down nearly 4 percent from September 1999 and nearly 13 percent from the previous year. Planted and harvested acres remained unchanged from September for all small grains. **Winter wheat** and **spring wheat** production estimates also are unchanged from September. **Oats** yield is reduced by 3 bushels per acre to 46 bushels and production decreased 6 percent from September to 3.22 million bushels.

Nationally, **durum wheat** was the only wheat revised and production is now set at 100.4 million bushels, down nearly 9 percent from the September estimate. Yield declined 0.7 bushels per acre and harvested acreage was reduced by 250,000 acres. **Oats** production declined 1 percent from September and is set at 146.5 million bushels.

Montana's on farm **oats stocks** were reduced 200,000 bushels from September to 2.8 million bushels. Montana's on farm **wheat stocks** remained unchanged from September.

Nationally, on farm **oats stocks** were reduced by 1.2 million bushels from the September estimate to 96.3 million bushels. **Barley** on farm stocks were reduced by 2.0 million bushels to 165.1 million bushels. On farm **durum** wheat stocks were reduced by 9.0 million bushels to 98.4 million bushels and **all wheat** was reduced by 10.0 million bushels to 893.1 million bushels. Revisions were made to on farm stocks only.

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First November 1 Crop Forecast to include Dry Peas & Lentils

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 10, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Curt Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

The first forecast of Montana **dry edible pea** production was 663,000 hundredweight. Montana's dry edible pea estimates were not published last year so comparisons could not be made. Planted acreage for 1999 was estimated at 50,000 acres, and 39,000 acres were harvested. The yield is forecast at 1700 pounds per acre.

Production of dry edible peas in Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, and Washington in 1999 is estimated at 5.03 million cwt, down 15 percent from 1998 and down 13 percent from two years ago. Overall, planted area in the U. S. reached 281,600 acres, 41,800 acres fewer than a year ago. Harvested acres stood at 263,600 acres compared with 309,100 acres last year. Average yields fell 12 pounds to 1,908 pounds per acre.

Montana's first **lentil** production forecast was 208,000 hundredweight for 1999. Planted acreage was set at 19,000 acres, and 16,000 acres were harvested. The yield is forecast at 1,300 pounds per acre.

Production of lentils in Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, and Washington is estimated at 2.39 million cwt, up 23 percent from the 1998 crop. Planted and harvested acreage are above last year in both Idaho and Washington. Harvested area is estimated at 174,500 acres, 16,000 acres more than in 1998. Average yield per acre, at 1,368 pounds, is 145 pounds above last year.

Montana **sugar beet** production was forecast at 1.473 million tons on November 1, 1999 up 1 percent from last month's forecast and up 4 percent from last year. Forecasted yield, of 23.8 tons per acre, is up 0.3 tons per acre from last month and is 1.2 tons per acre higher than last year. Harvested acreage is up 100 acres from last month at 61,900 acres, but this is 500 acres less than 1998. As of November 1, ninety-nine percent of the crop had been harvested which is 7 points higher than the five-year average.

U.S. sugar beet production is forecast at a record high 33.4 million tons, 2 percent above the previous record in 1998. Growers in the 12 sugar beet-producing States expect to harvest 1,525,200 acres, 5 percent more than last year and the highest since 1,540,500 acres were harvested in 1969. The yield is forecast at 21.9 tons per acre, below the 1998 yield of 22.5 tons.

Montana **fall potato** production is forecast at 3.216 million hundredweight, up 1 percent from last year. Harvested acres are estimated at 10,900 acres, up 300 acres from last year. The yield is forecast at 295 cwt per acre, 5 cwt per acre lower than last year. As of November 1, ninety five percent of the crop has been harvested which is 1 point above the five-year average.

Nationally, fall potato production for 1999 is forecast at 436 million cwt, up 1 percent from last year and 3 percent above 1997. Area harvested, at 1.18 million acres, is down 3 percent from last year and down less than 1 percent from two years ago. The average yield is forecast at 369 cwt per acre, a jump of 13 cwt from last year and 12 cwt above two years ago.

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Revised September 1, 1999 Grain Stocks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 16, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Peggy Stringer at 1-800-835-2612

On farm grain stocks were reviewed after the November re-interview of Montana and North Dakota producers who reported unharvested small grains during the September Agricultural Survey. September 1 on farm oats grain stocks were the only Montana grain stock revision. The revisions to small grains stocks, harvested acreage, and yield are available in the November 10 *Crop Production* report.

All wheat stocks in Montana on September 1, 1999 were estimated at192.85 million bushels, down 4 percent from September 1998 estimate. Stocks stored on the farm accounted for 165.0 million bushels and off farm stocks accounted for 27.85 million bushels. All **spring wheat** stocks, at 145.0 million bushels, were up 8 percent from last year and accounted for 75 percent of the total wheat stocks. **Winter wheat** stocks remained at 47.85 million bushels, down 29 percent from last year. **Durum wheat** stocks estimates were 17.86 million bushels, up 7.11 million bushels a 66 percent increase from last year. All wheat disappearance for the March-May quarter was 33.53 million bushels, compared with 34.09 million for the same quarter last year. **Barley** stocks in all positions on September 1, 1999 were up 10 percent from last year and was unchanged at 56.0 million bushels. **Revised Oats stocks** were down 10 percent from a year ago and were estimated at 2.88 million bushels. On farm September oats stocks were reduced from 3.0 million to 2.8 million bushels.

North Dakota reduced its September 1 **oats** on farm grain stocks 1.0 million bushels to 16.5 million bushels. On farm **barley** stocks were revised from 47.0 million to 45.0 million bushels, on farm **durum** wheat stocks were lowered 9.0 million to 81.0 million bushels, and **all wheat** on farm stocks declined 10.0 million bushels to 245.0 million bushels.

Nationally, **all wheat** stored in all positions September 1, 1999 were revised to 2.45 billion bushels, up 3 percent from a year ago and the highest September 1 level since the 1987-88 marketing year. On farm stocks were reduced 10.0 million bushels to 893 million bushels, which is 1 percent higher than last year.

U.S. **durum wheat** stored in all positions September 1, 1999 totaled 138 million bushels, up 10 percent from a year ago to the highest September 1 level since 1987. On farm stocks are 98 million bushels, up 12 percent from last year and 9.0 million bushels lower than the original September 1 estimate. Off-farm stocks, at 39.9 million bushels, are up 5 percent from last September.

U.S. **barley** stocks in all positions on September 1, 1999 are estimated at 295 million bushels, 10 percent below last year. Of the total barley stocks on hand, 165 million bushels are stored on farms, 15 percent below a year ago and 2.0 million bushels less than the initial September 1 estimate. Off-farm stocks, at 130 million bushels, are only 2 percent below 1998.

U.S. **oats** stored in all positions on September 1, 1999 totaled 147 million bushels, 9 percent below the stocks on September 1, 1998. On farm stocks on hand were reduced 1.2 million bushels to 96.3 million bushels, 13 percent below this time last year. Off-farm stocks totaled 51.0 million bushels, 1 percent below a year earlier.

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Agricultural Prices Received for October

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 30, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Steve Sakry or Curt Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

Crop prices for the full month of October 1999 were mixed compared with September 1999 prices, according to Montana Agricultural Statistics Service. Montana winter wheat average price was $2.82 per bushel, up 8 cents from September's level; durum wheat was $3.12 per bushel, up 20 cents; but spring wheat was 9 cents lower at $2.95 per bushel. Feed barley was $1.49 and malt barley was $2.54 per bushel.

The mid-November price for alfalfa hay was $66.00 per ton, down $1.00 from last month. Other hay, at $58.00 per ton, was $3.00 higher than October's mid-month price. The mid-November winter wheat price averaged $2.80 per bushel, spring wheat was $3.10, feed barley was $1.50, and malt barley averaged $2.55.

Livestock prices for the full month of October were also mixed. Steer and heifer prices increased $7.90 to $82.70 per cwt. Cows were down $2.90 to $33.90 and the average price for calves was unchanged at $90.40 per cwt. Sheep prices decreased $4.00 to $24.20 per cwt, but lamb prices increased 70 cents to $74.60 per cwt. Milk prices were up $1.50 from last month at $16.50 per cwt. Steer and heifer prices for mid-November averaged $83.00 per cwt.

Nationally, prices for October and changes from September were as follows: winter wheat was $2.47, up 1 cent; spring wheat was $2.80, down 6 cents; the all barley price was $1.96, down 7 cents; and steer and heifer prices were $70.10, up $3.00.

The U.S. mid-November winter wheat price was $2.36 per bushel, spring wheat was $2.87 per bushel, all wheat was $2.54 per bushel, and all barley was $2.13. Steer and heifer prices were $70.80 per cwt, cow prices were $33.00, all hog prices were $32.90 per cwt, and all egg prices were 64.3 cents per dozen.

The preliminary All Farm Products Index of Prices Received in November was 93 based on 1990-92=100, up 2 points (2.2 percent) from the October index. The seasonal change in the mix of commodities farmers sell affects the overall index. Higher seasonal marketings of cattle, milk, cotton, and cottonseed more than offset the relatively lower marketings of potatoes, soybeans, peanuts, and lettuce. These marketing changes account for most of the November index increase. Higher prices for broilers, eggs, potatoes, and corn slightly offset price decreases for milk, soybeans, oranges, hogs, and lettuce.

Compared with November 1998, the All Farm Products Index was 6 points (6.1 percent) lower. Price decreases from November 1998 for milk, cotton, soybeans, and corn more than offset price increases for cattle, hogs, apples, and calves.

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1999 Dry Edible Bean Production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 10, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Darin Jantzi or Curt Lund at 1-800-835-2612.

Production for Montana's **dry edible bean** crop was estimated at 454,000 cwt, up 30 percent from the 1998 crop. Planted acreage for 1999 was estimated at 26,500 acres, up 60 percent from last year's estimate because of a significant increase in garbanzo beans. Harvested area for this year is 25,700 acres, up 61 percent from 1998. The yield is forecast at 1,770 pounds per acre, 420 pounds less than last year. Yield results were mixed in Montana. Some growers had excellent growing conditions and produced a favorable crop, while other areas received significant moisture during harvest which caused poor quality and abandonment.

Pinto bean production for Montana is estimated to be 302,000 cwt, which is 14 percent above last year's estimate. Acres planted are estimated at 13,900 acres, also up 14 percent from 1998. Harvested acreage, at 13,500, is 13 percent higher than the previous year. The yield is forecast at 2,240 pounds per acre, 40 pounds more than last year.

The biggest increases occurred with the **garbanzo bean** crop. Montana's second production forecast was 140,000 hundredweight for 1999, which is 67 percent higher than last year. Planted acreage was set at 12,100 acres, which is three times larger than the 1998 crop. Harvested area is estimated at 11,700 acres. The yield is forecast at 1,200 pounds per acre, down from last year's estimate of 2,210 pounds per acre.

U.S. production of dry edible beans is estimated at 33.1 million cwt for 1999, 9 percent above 1998 and 13 percent above two years ago. Area for harvest is estimated at 1.86 million acres, down 3 percent from 1998 but 6 percent above 1997. Average yield, at 1,781 pounds per acre, increased 195 pounds from 1998. Production is up in 1999 for all estimating states except New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming.

In North Dakota early harvest progress was a week behind average due to late plantings in the spring and wet weather during early September. However, due to dry conditions during October, harvest was virtually complete by the third week, slightly ahead of average. Wet conditions during the growing season in some areas of the Northeast district promoted diseases such as white mold which contributed to abandoned acreage.

Harvest in Idaho was completed ahead of average due to good weather conditions during harvest. Yields for dryland producers in Colorado are higher due to adequate moisture during the growing season. Utah's dry bean production is up this year due to ample rains during the growing season in their major growing area.

Production is above 1998 levels for all varieties except black, pink, and pinto. Pinto, the largest variety, decreased 23 percent from 1998, while navy, the next largest variety, increased 88 percent.

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December 1 Hog and Pig Inventory Down

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 28, 1999
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Bo Turnbow or Curtis Lund at 1-800-835-2612

The inventory of all hogs and pigs in Montana on December 1, 1999 was 150,000 head, a 21 percent decrease from a year ago. Breeding stock was down 11 percent from last December to 17,000 head. Market hog numbers decreased to 133,000 head, down 22 percent from last year.

From December 1998 to November 1999, 36,000 sows farrowed in Montana. This was a decrease of 6 percent from a year earlier. The number of pigs saved per litter increased by 1 percent to 9.03 and resulted in a pig crop of 325,000 head, a 6 percent decrease from last year. There were 600 farms with one or more hogs in Montana in 1999, down 8 percent from last year.

U.S. inventory of all hogs and pigs on December 1, 1999, was 59.4 million head. This was 4 percent below December 1998, and 2 percent below September 1, 1999.

Breeding inventory, at 6.24 million head, was down 7 percent from December 1, 1998, and down 1 percent from September 1, 1999. Market hog inventory, at 53.2 million head, was 4 percent below last year, and 2 percent below last quarter.

The September-November 1999 U.S. pig crop, at 25.2 million head, was 3 percent less than 1998, and 1 percent less than 1997. Sows farrowing during this period totaled 2.87 million head, 4 percent below last year. The sows farrowed during this quarter represented 46 percent of the breeding herd. The average pigs per litter rose to an average of 8.78 pigs saved per litter for the September-November period, compared to 8.66 pigs last year. Pigs saved per litter by size of operation ranged from 7.40 for operations with 1-99 hogs to 8.90 for operations with more than 5,000 hogs and pigs.

U.S. hog producers intend to have 2.81 million sows farrow during the December 1999-February 2000 quarter, 3 percent below the actual farrowings during the same period in 1999, and 4 percent below 1998. Intended farrowings for March-May 2000, at 2.83 million sows, are 5 percent below the same period last year and 8 percent below 1998.

The number of hog operations with hogs totaled 98,460 during 1999, down 14 percent from last year and 19 percent below 1997. Places with 2,000 or more hogs on hand accounted for 7 percent of the operations and 69 percent of the inventory. This is the fourth time operations with inventories over 2,000 head have controlled over 50 percent of the total inventory. The number of operations with over 5,000 head of inventory at 2,005 accounted for 46.5 percent of the total inventory, up from 42 percent a year ago. The total number of hogs under contract, owned by these over 5,000 head operations, but raised by contractees, accounted for 32 percent of the total U.S. hog inventory up from 23 percent last year.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT: Carmen Pennington or Darin Jantzi at 1-800-835-2612

MONTANA FARMERS TO TELL FARM FINANCIAL SITUATION

Montana farmers and ranchers will have the opportunity to "let their voice be heard" by participating in the1999 agricultural economic surveys. These surveys, titled the 1999 Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey and the 1999 Agricultural Resource Management Study, provide vital statistics about the economic condition of production agriculture.

Among many others, results from these surveys will be used by farm and ranch operators, farm organizations, commodity groups, lenders, university researchers, news media, local USDA agencies, and farm suppliers. A few specific examples are as follows:

- Helps members of the agricultural community and their legislators when making important decisions that impact the future of America's farmers and ranchers.
- Helps determine how much economic strain is placed on farmers when considering lower prices coupled with higher input costs, land values, and rent.
- Help determine disaster relief and direct payment funding.
- Helps farmers and ranchers to determine the feasibility of expansion or other operation management decisions.
- Helps land grant universities and other researchers to study financial and socio-economic farm family characteristics.
- Helps farm lenders to assess lending risk to the agricultural community and adjust credit standards.

Agricultural producers chosen to participate in these surveys will represent from 50 to 100 fellow producers, and will therefore make an important contribution to the overall welfare of America's farmers and ranchers. These are the only surveys which objectively measure the current financial health of our farms and ranches.

Producers chosen to participate will either receive a 1999 Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey in the mail or will be visited by an interviewer to complete the report at the farm or ranch operator's convenience during the months of February and March. Results will be published in a series of reports on the current farm financial situation. For a copy of the finished report or to obtain other agricultural statistics, visit the Montana Agricultural Statistics Service website at www.nass.usda.gov/mt/ or call 1-800-835-2612.

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